KODAKA KAZUTAKA
小高和剛
ILLUSTRATION:
小松崎類
ダンガンロンパ
DANGANRONPA / ZERO
ゼロ
サイコロジック、ここに始まる。
刊行に先駆けて
上巻分を期間無期限・全文掲載!
全ミステリーファンを沸騰させた傑作ゲーム「ダンガンロンパ」の目眩く"前日譚"を、
担当シナリオライター・小高和剛が自ら小説化。

CHAPTER 1

“Yasuke-kun.”

“What is it?”

“Heeey, Yasuke-kun.”

“I said what is it?!”

“Why are you angry?”

“Are you for real? Because I spent my entire day trying to find a criminal! You should have said it was you who destroyed it all along! Why’d you lie about it?!”

“I didn’t really lie about anything. I just didn’t say mention it!”

“It’s the same thing! Why did you do such a thing?!”

“It’s because… you never leave your house anymore, Yasuke-kun…”

“…Huh?”

“I thought maybe if I made a sandcastle you’d come look. There’s no sense in making them if you don’t look at them…”

“It’s none of your business…”

“…Yasuke-kun, why were you hiding?”

“Shut up.”

“Don’t you like people seeing you cry…?”

“I’ll hit you!”

“You can’t hit a girl, Yasuke-kun.”

“You’re just another dimwitted girl with no personality!”

“I… I won’t cry… okay…”

“I’m not trying to make you cry!”

“I won’t cry! Because the person who really wants to cry is Yasuke-

kun!”

“W-What are you saying? I don’t cry…”

“Why do you keep pretending to be strong?”

“I’m not trying to be strong!”

“… You don’t have to pretend to be strong in front of me… I don’t care if I’m a dimwitted girl with no personality…”

“……”

“Anyway, if I saw you crying I bet I’d like you more…”

“That’s kinda gross…”

“It’s fine if it’s gross. Besides, I’ve decided something. Even if you hide, I’ll always be by your side. You can’t escape me.”

“You sound like stalker.”

“I’m not a stalker. I’m your lover.”

“Since when were you my lover? Is that something you decided by yourself?”

“Hey, since we’re lovers, I’ll be with you when you’re sad.”

“I’m not really… sad…”

“There you go pretending to be strong again.”

“I’m not pretending to be strong! I’m just not sad!!”

“Yasuke-kun…”

“In the end she didn’t even remember who I am! She just figured I was just some kid she didn’t care about! I couldn’t even call her mum anymore in case she’d get scared, I had to pretend to be someone else’s kid! I’m not gonna cry for her sake! Now that she’s dead I’ve got a load off my shoulders! I don’t have to be an actor in a play anymore!”

“But it was because of the disease…”

“I said it was unavoidable, didn’t I? I’m sick of hearing it! The doctor

was always saying that! The doctor didn't do anything! If he were really a doctor he would have cured my mum's disease"

"… He sounds like a phony."

"Hmmm… If I were a doctor, I would have cured her disease easily…"

"… Are you going to cry?"

"I said I don't cry!"

"… Don't worry. I'll never forget about you, Yasuke-kun."

"W-what… that's a weird thing to say suddenly…"

"It's not weird. I really mean it. Even if I forget everything else in this world, I'll absolutely remember you."

"If you do… forget, what will you do… ?"

"Then you'll cure me, Yasuke-kun. If you become a doctor, you'll be able to cure any disease I have, won't you?"

"Well… yeah, I guess…"

"And, if you forget, I'll remember you. But if I don't remember, we'll still be together forever! We'd spend our whole lives looking after each other!"

"I knew it, you really are a stalker, aren't you?"

"Anyway, we'll always be together! Hey, since we'll always be together, it's okay to do embarrassing things. It's okay to cry, you can cry forever."

"You… really are weird…"

"Ehehe, so have you given up?"

"… You won't laugh at me?"

"I won't laugh at you."

"… You won't try to comfort me?"

"I won't try to comfort you."

"… You won't tell anyone?"

“I don’t have any friends to tell it to!”

“I don’t have any friends either… Or any family.”

For the first time in his life, Matsuda Yasuke cried in public.

CHAPTER 2

Hope's Peak Academy's east district.

The faculty building.

In the unpopular fourth floor's corridor, only two sets of footsteps could be heard. One set of footsteps belonged to the school physician. The other belonged to 'Super High School Level Neurologist', Matsuda Yasuke. The physician, with dark shadows cast over his face, led Matsuda, a depressing feeling floated in the atmosphere. Matsuda wore his usual dingy white shirt that fit him loosely, the hem of his shirt met his trousers and he wore a jacket of the top. It clung to his shoulders stiffly as he walked, most likely because he never wore it.

"… Ah, I really owe you one for this," said the physician walking ahead of him, Matsuda raised his head, "he's no where near my specialty… I was extremely troubled on what to do. So I appreciate your cooperation with this." He had a relieved sounding voice - Matsuda replied in an indifferent voice.

"Still, in the future you should talk to an expert about it. But, if you can't do that, come to me… That's all there is to it, right?"

"T-That's-" The physician choked back his words. Matsuda could not see his face from his position, but he could easily imagine the man in front of him looked concerned.

Did something happen?

Matsuda took some deep breaths to calm himself.

"…It's fine. I'm not going to use the excuse that I'm a student on you. No, instead I should be helping the experts more."

"I… I see… in any case, I owe you my thanks." The physician's face returned to normal. However, in turn Matsuda had only become more tense and irritated. He reminded himself to suppress his emotions.

Either way, there's no turning back.

So I can protect her I need to keep going on.

No, instead…I need to keep falling down…?

The physician continued to lead him around the corridor corner. Matsuda followed him - the atmosphere immediately changed. This part of the corridor was eerily silent, he felt the temperature rapidly drop. On one side of the corridor, every window was covered up by thick curtains. The other side was lined with a number of doors, on each door there was a darkly tinted small window. This corridor was longer than the last. The faculty building was exactly as Matsuda had imagined it would look like since he first learnt of its existence.

"…Usually, all the rooms are vacant." The physician abruptly started to explain. He may have sensed Matsuda's question.

So then, I suppose he means these rooms are only really used in an emergency.

He followed the physician, looking around absentmindedly. The physician who had been walking ahead of him stopped suddenly.

"… This is it." As he said that, he gestured to the door next to him. There wasn't anything unique about the door, in fact it was a miracle the man was able to identify the door. "Apparently all the equipment has already been delivered but… Can you really go by yourself? The principal had asked for two people…"

"It's fine." Matsuda replied flatly.

"No, but…" The physician hesitated. Matsuda had rendered his argument useless.

"The principle and the steering committee have given me full access, in their absence they have left it to me. Besides, it would make no difference if two people went. Actually it would probably affect the subject in a bad way. So, I ask of you to please leave the rest to me."

"Mhm" The physician looked subdued - He quickly gave up and nodded, not bothering to argue anymore. "I see. Well then, I'll leave it to you." The physician turned away from Matsuda and walked around the corner into the depths of the corridor.

After Matsuda watched the man walk away, he turned his gaze to the door in front of him. He slowly opened the door -behind it was a dimly lit, wide space. The first thing he noticed was the room was filled to the brim with various electronic devices. This place had more high tech equipment than the school's humble school hospital or the research facility.

Well, that's Hope's Peak Academy for you.

That was the impression the room before him gave Matsuda. However, he felt tense as he stepped foot into the room. The fluorescent lights over him seemed to be unreliable in comparison to the ones used in the classrooms, the window on the back wall was also covered in a thick hanging curtain, the overall lighting of the room was quite dark. Due to that, the light emitted from the electronic devices stood out more. In the centre of the room was a bed, surrounded by the shining lights.

Matsuda's line of sight drifted towards the figure on the bed. There was a man sleeping. He slowly walked to the side of the bed closest to him and looked down at the man. He had shallow facial features and a pure and honest face, as if he were a swordsman out of a movie based on Feudal Japan, but something caught his eye more - there was a bandage wrapped several times over a painful looking wound on his head.

Matsuda knew who he was. The man's name was Murasame Soushun. In the top position at the student council, he was the 'Super High School Level Student Council President'. He was also one of the 'survivors' of The Worst, Largest Incident in Hope's Peak Academy's History. As if examining, Matsuda turned his gaze to the man. The man, lying on his back, had his eyes firmly open - although they saw nothing. They stared straight up at the ceiling, without moving, without blinking.

"… It's been a while." Matsuda tried calling out - but there was no response. He picked up the medical records next to the bed. He had already been told what was written there beforehand, more or less.

Murasame Soushun was involved in 'The Worst, Largest Incident in Hope's Peak Academy's History', during which he suffered serious head trauma. Fortunately, he escaped any life-threatening injuries, he was supposedly able to recover however for several days to even after several weeks he was still not responsive at all. The reason as to why remains unknown.

As Matsuda returned the medical record to the bedside table he tried raising his voice again.

"Do you know who I am? I'm Matsuda Yasuke, from your class. I'm the Super High School Level Neurologist they were talking about. We've met several times before." As he expected there was no

response. Matsuda continued to prompt him, “So, why do you think I came here?”

As he sat down, he looked at Murasame’s face. He stared intently, searching for any hint of a reaction.

“I was asked by the school headmaster and members of the steering committee. I said I wanted to help your recovery. Even though I said I wanted to hear about what happened - they wouldn’t tell me anything. In fact, they did the opposite. In order to cover it up, it seems they want to hear the full story from you.” Matsuda paused and emphasized the words that followed. “Well, that’s supposedly their intentions.”

As always, Murasame didn’t respond but Matsuda continued anyway.

“If you ask me, they don’t like that you came back. That’s why they sent me. So, even if I do everything I possible can, you can’t stay. So, I don’t really care either way. Having you gone will probably work out for the best for them. But what if you don’t disappear? If you do come back, that’d really screw over their plans, won’t it? When that happens, I wonder what they’ll do… Once they get the story out of you, they’d be under a lot of pressure…” As Matsuda explained the circumstances he picked up Murasame’s right hand - After lifting it up he soon released it. However the man’s hand showed no sign of strength and dropped straight back onto the bed.

“But, I don’t really know about that either… They’re trying to hide and abandon the student council president… Because there’s a criminal behind the incident, isn’t there?” Matsuda leaned forward. They’re faces were almost touching. He looked deeply into Murasame’s unseeing eyes. One false move and this will turn into yaoi ronpa

“So, what do you think? Do you know the culprit? You need to tell me. Why are they protecting them?” As always there was no reply. Whether from his expression or from his eyes, there wasn’t a hint of recognition.

“It really is useless…” Matsuda shook his head, looking frustrated. “Well, it’s just the the examination that was the failure.” He muttered grumpily as he scratched his head.

“Oh, that’s right.” He suddenly remembered something - he then asked in a tone feining casualness. “By any chance, do you know anyone by the name of Enoshima Junko?”

Murasame twitched slightly and his eyes moved. Matsuda expression turned into a glare quickly. Murasame turned directly towards him. Seeing that, Matsuda's reaction was surprisingly quite calm.

I knew it.

He couldn't help but feel discouraged.

It would be better if he were still unconscious.

But, not surprisingly, he wasn't. Though that was also to be expected. Matsuda had prepared for it a long time ago. He had no choice but to fall down from here. Like a fate that he had been doomed to since the very start. He was cursed to an unchangeable destiny. He knew he couldn't stop it, no matter what he did. The ground he was firmly walking on until now had collapsed. As he fell to the bottom of the deep abyss and he could taste it in his mouth.

It was just a metaphor but it was also quite real.

Even as he fell, Matsuda knew exactly what was happening.

CHAPTER 3

The sun's dazzling light beat down on the pavement outside the dormitory so brightly I couldn't help but squint my eyes though it wasn't strong enough to feel on my skin. In fact, I even shivered a little as the chilly wind ran past me. Despite all this I felt relaxed and stress-free as I sat down on a nearby bench and let out a deep sigh.

Ah, what a peaceful day.

I wanted to shout my thoughts out to the wind - I tilted my head to the side suddenly.

Huh? Wasn't there somewhere I needed to go?

I took 'Otonashi Ryouko's Memory Notebook' out of my backpack and opened it up so I could verify what it was I was supposed to do but my hand suddenly stopped. By chance the page I opened my notebook to was covered by a drawing of a man. My heart thumped a little faster.

"Eh, Matsuda-kun… ?" I couldn't spot any differences between the picture and the real thing but my heart was only beating a little faster. Perhaps, it's not really all that similar after all. "Hmmm, I guess if I change it a little it'll look more like him… ?"

It wasn't that I couldn't remember Matsuda-kun's face, I just needed to use my heartbeat in the place of my memory.

Maybe it's the eyes, or perhaps the mouth… I thought to myself as I drew. After some time my heart was almost pounding like it would in front of the real thing.

"Yup! That's probably more similar!" I patiently examined it as I gazed at it, Matsuda-kun. Matsuda-kun. Matsuda-kun. I repeated his name in my mind - See? My heart's pounding.

My heart beated harder as I brought the portrait closer to my face. As I drew more, it made the feeling stronger. I don't think I'm perverted or anything like that but I didn't want to kiss it in just a non-sexual way - I suddenly tilted my head to the side suddenly.

Huh? Wasn't there somewhere I needed to go?

With that thought in mind, I bid farewell to Matsuda-kun's picture and began flipping through my notebook. After turning through the pages

for a short while - I finally remembered, at the same time I could feel my mood take a dramatic drop. I don't know why exactly but my whole body started to tremble. I remembered - I remembered that ridiculous murderer's confession.

That's right. Enoshima Junko also told me her purposes that time.

Kill your beloved darling, Matsuda Yasuke.

"She said… even if I don't remember… I'm still involved…" I was still trembling, she couldn't be right. I should quickly warn Matsuda-kun of the crisis he's in! I need to go to the biology building in the east district - that's where Matsuda-kun's neurology research is!

"I have no time to lose!" I jumped up from the bench and started to sprint with all my strength. Right now it was either break time or lunch time and the school was crowded with students outdoors. I pushed past people as I ran at full speed across the pavement. Of course, the people I pushed past would scream and cry things like "WAAH!" and "KYAA!" - but I didn't care.

Anyway, I was running across the pavement, leaving my thoughts behind and sprinting as fast as I could. I left any unneeded, idle thoughts fly away with the wind, my bullet of love was shooting directly towards where Matsuda-kun was.

I cut directly through the Central Plaza and arrived at the east district, I continued pushing past the other students and practically dived towards the biology building. My throat was dry and felt painful, in an instant I was leaping up the stairs. My breathing was erratic and heavy, I continued to push down my thoughts like how much my throat hurt or how much I'd like to take a rest out of my mind and kept sprinting. As soon as I arrived at the lab, I didn't bother to knock on the door, instead I threw it open.

"MATSUDA-KUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUN!!" I screamed with my remaining strength.

A short high school boy in the middle of the room straightened up in surprise and began trembling. His eyes were wide in surprise and turned to me, he was completely rigid and frozen.

Somehow, he doesn't look familiar at all.

Come to think of it, my heart isn't racing or beating any harder than usual.

“C-Could it be… you’re not Matsuda-kun?”

“Mmm…”

“T-That’s not a clear answer… ! Which ‘mmm’ do you mean?” I ended up yelling louder than I should have, but it was because I was still panting.

“Erm… I meant I’m not him by ‘mmm’…”

“Then where’s Matsuda-kun?!” I quickly looked around the lab.

God damn it, there’s no one else here.

“He’s out now, probably…”

“That’s - If you looked, you’d know!” I roared back at him, I was at my wit’s end. “Argh, come on!” I felt my stamina rapidly disappear and fell to my knees. “Of all the times he could disappeaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaar! Where did he gooooooooooooo?!”

I continued ranting while I sat on my knees, the young man ran over to me.

“I-it’s fine, you shouldn’t worry so much. I’m sure he’ll be back soon!”

“……”

He looked down at me, why was he so worried about me? He looked at my with such concerned eyes, or maybe they were the opposite of worried. Maybe they were-

“… Actually you’re a little suspicious.” I started.

“… Huh?”

“Or is your personality just like that? I mean, maybe you’re the kind of person that stares at clearly distraught, high school girls… Eek, keep away!” I fell onto my bum and tried to scoot away - The boy quickly looked away.

Shocked, my skirt flipped up, and more and more of my thighs were exposed.

“Eeek!” I patted down my skirt.

The boy was still looking away with his face bright red and spoke up

“I d-didn’t do that! You seemed worried so all I did was talk to you…”

“Y-You liar! This is the first time we’ve met, I’m a complete stranger, it’s weird to be concerned for someone you’ve never met before. I bet you just have some ulterior motive or secret intention or an evil plan or something…”

“… Eh?” The atmosphere suddenly changed to a more serious tone. “… A complete stranger?” He turned and looked straight at me, surprised.

Ah, that reaction, so then -

“… Huh? Have you met me before by any chance?” As I said that, the boy only looked more surprised, but only for a moment, he quickly changed his expression to a more formal one.

“My name is… Naegi Makoto.” He said, suddenly introducing himself.

“… Aah, it’s a pleasure.” As I replied, my line of sight dropped down to ‘Otonashi Ryouko’s Memory Notebook’. Obviously his name didn’t sound familiar to me at all, but I checked for any sign of his name in my notebook - His name wasn’t anywhere in there.

So then we haven’t met before.

I sent him a confused look, he returned a puzzled expression. His reactions were just becoming more and more suspicious - no matter what he says, this guy is definitely a pervert. I held my notebook in one hand, stood up and questioned him further.

“So, why are you a student at this school?”

“… Eh?”

“Huuh? Don’t have a reasooon?” He really was suspicious after all, I stared at him, squinting my eyes.

“Ah, no, there’s a reason, it’s just… I wouldn’t call it special…” As his sentence fell apart, he looked away, he was just becoming more and more suspicious - I continued to squint my eyes.

“I g-get it…” The boy nodded reluctantly, it seemed like he finally decided to talk. “Erm, since I’m particularly lucky…”

“… Excuse me?”

“So I’m ‘Super High School Level Good Luck’.”

“Super High School Level… Good Luck?” There seemed to be one underlying problem I was pretty anxious to learn about. “… So you’re saying your talent is good luck?”

“I don’t really get it either… but, that’s what the school told me. Every year one person is chosen from a nationwide lottery of ordinary high school students, that student is entered into the school under the title of ‘Super High School Level Good Luck’. So, by chance it turns out… I was the winner.”

Hmm, somehow -

“That’s kind of a jip…”

“Yeah, it really is, isn’t it?” Naegi-kun seemed just as troubled over it as I.

Anyway, his innocence was becoming more and more apparent - However I still had no reason to believe him. It’s much easier to just accept it as it was, though I’m not what you would call a loose woman.

“So, what is Mr. ‘Super High School Level Good Luck’ doing in this lab? Tell me, are you an acquaintance of Matsuda-kun? No lies!”

“Um, well…” Naegi-kun pulled something out of his uniform pocket. It was something that appeared to be a thin smartphone. “Matsuda Yasuke-san dropped this. It’s always a hassle when someone loses something so I thought I’d give it back to him but…”

“… What is that? I’ve never seen it before.”

“I’m sure this isn’t your first time seeing it… look, it’s an electronic student handbook.”

Naegi-kun explained that this ‘electronic student handbook’ was only given out to students from the main school. It’s a high tech piece of equipment with a variety of uses, as well as just acting as a student’s ID. If a student doesn’t present it, they lose access to some facilities.

“I found this by a bush in the courtyard. It’s an inconvenience to lose this so I thought I should come here so I could pass it back to him as quickly as possible… but he doesn’t seem to be here.”

What? So then, does that mean Naegi-kun is-

“I-It’s no good! I can’t do it!!”

“W-What?”

“I can’t say sorry to you for saying you were suspicious, you’re only pretending to be a nice guy!”

“I-I’m not suspicious!” He quickly shook his head, “I’m not pretending to be nice or anything either… I just came here to give back Matsuda-san’s lost item! That’s really all there is to it!!”

“… Really?”

“R-Really!”

Well then, I suppose whether or not there’s any more to this - I’ll just have to believe him for now.

“Fine… I see.”

“… You believe me now?” Naegi-kun breathed a sigh of relief as he laid a hand on his chest.

I turned to the boy, I pointed my index finger towards him, with the momentum it made a stiffening sound effect like the ones you read in manga.

“What you said was pretty misleading! You should have said from the very start that you weren’t suspicious!”

“Huh? Um, uh… Sorry.”

I don’t know why he was saying sorry suddenly but he had an apologetic expression on his face.

“But you know, I guess that makes you unlucky. I mean, coming all the way here to return a lost item only to find he wasn’t here. … Ah, I shouldn’t be saying unlucky considering you’re Mr. Super High School Level Good Luck himself.”

CHAPTER 3

“No, I’m used to this bad luck now…” Naegi-kun said, letting another bitter expression appear on his face.

Claiming to be ‘Super High School Level Good Luck’ then saying he’s ‘used to his bad luck’, somehow it seems like he has a really unreliable talent - what a strange guy.

He’s strange - I don’t think I could find a word that suited him more than that.

That’s it, he’s just a strange guy.

He’s such an ordinarily ordinary guy, he’s strange.

According to my notebook, all students at Hope’s Peak Academy are motivated and look towards the future, they are highly competitive and overflowing with ambition. They’re brimming with hope - if it were me in his situation, I’d end up feeling bad - I guess.

But it didn’t seem to be the case with him. That might be the reason why I think he’s so strange. Naegi-kun suddenly interrupted my train of thought.

“But if that’s true…”

“… Eh?” Without realising it, I asked him to repeat himself. “If what’s true?”

“Eh? I-It’s nothing… It’s not important!” He replied hurriedly, it seemed like he was just talking to himself earlier.

“If it’s not important then you can tell me. What do you mean by if that’s true?” I ended up responding with an uncharacteristically strong tone of voice. Somehow, this guy’s entire nature and attitude makes him strange. “Hey, tell me already! If it’s not important then you should tell me. I’m right, aren’t I? Hurry up and reply!”

“Ok-okay…”

“You should only reply with ‘okay’ once. I’m not your teacher!”

“… I only said it once, didn’t I?”

Huh, really? I've already forgotten.

"Whatever! Just hurry up and tell me! If you don't tell me already, I'll end up forgetting what it is you're telling me!"

"Well, you see… I've only heard a rumour, so I'm not sure if I can believe it… but I thought it might be true…"

"… A rumour?" I once again raised my finger towards him, pointing it only a few centimetres away from his forehead. "Was it rumour about me? I won't stand for any awful rumours out there tainting my good name!"

"N-No, no! It's nothing like that!"

"So then, what sort of rumour is it?"

"Um, i-it's…" Naegi-kun looked away from me before hesitantly continuing, "…the rumour said there's student that's become forgetful…"

"Become… forgetful…?" Somehow I couldn't say anymore. Any knowledge of stringing a sentence together had mysteriously disappeared. I was planning to ask him if he knew me before I became forgetful -

"Ah!" I suddenly raised my voice. I shuddered as if I had been hit by a thunderbolt.

"W-What's wrong…" Naegi-kun turned to me again with a worried expression. I quickly opened 'Otonashi Ryouko's Memory Notebook' again and flipped through the pages, and flipped, and flipped, and flipped-I saw a light that blinded my eyes for a moment. There was an explosion. The memories in my notebook and a flash of inspiration collided together and caused a violent chemical reaction.

Sandwiched in my notebook was a single letter.

Dear Super High School Level Idiotic Forgetful girl,

I'm the one who took all your precious "past memories" that you so carefully wrote down. They're filled to the brim with "memories" of that Matsuda Yasuke. The past carries a lot of weight, doesn't it? Doesn't it? Am I right? It does…

"Hey, earlier you said a student had 'become forgetful', didn't you?" I

was overtaken by an immense excitement as I stood up. “So then the students here know about me before I became forgetful? You too, right? You also knew me before I was forgetful? Speak up!”

“C-Calm down!” Naegi-kun desperately tried to settle me down. “I don’t really know but… it seems like it was due to some sort of illness, but I wasn’t really paying too much attention… since I’m not really all that good at talking to people…”

“It’s fine, just hurry up and tell me! Did you know me before I was forgetful? Did you?”

“Um… well, that’s…”

“Go on!”

“… Y-Yeah” He finally gave a small nod.

“I… I knew it…” I confirmed to myself.

The students at this school knew me before I had become forgetful - that means I had become forgetful after coming to this school. So then, what about that blackmail Enoshima Junko had written to me about my ‘past memories’? Did I really ever have such an important ‘memory notebook’? No, maybe it was all just a trap so she could get me to cooperate with her.

In other words, a lie.

So then, what else did she say? Let’s see, she told me she killed someone in the central plaza, she also told me that I had to kill Matsuda-kun. In the first place, does a person like Enoshima Junko even exist-As my thoughts circled through my head, I tried to remain focused on my notebook. ‘Lie’ and ‘Enoshima Junko’ were the two key phrases that were becoming more apparent. The words written on the page started to swirl around my mind. They gradually grew faster, swirling, turning, circling, they mixed and mingled together. For some reason, the depths of my head began to tingle. It was a strange tingling feeling.

This sensation is…

Huh? I feel like I’m remembering something…

“Hey…” An annoying voice came pounding into my thoughts. It was Naegi-kun’s voice. He didn’t seem bothered by anything. I stopped

concentrating on my notebook. I think I can almost remember it…

“Hey…”

Shut up!

“H-Hey…”

Argh, come on! I’m trying to concentrate here!

“Hey… !”

“Would you shut up already?!” I shouted at him and raised my face from my notebook - I froze.

I saw an unfamiliar man standing in front of us.

… Eh, who is that?

He grabbed Naegi-kun’s shoulders. He wore an unfamiliar school uniform and had unfamiliar long hair. His pitch black silhouette was vastly different to his ghostly white face. Piercing eyes, similar to a reptile’s had been carved into his face.

Our eyes met for a brief moment - a siren inside my head rang out, informing me of the dire emergency. I felt like I was having a heart attack as I felt my chest pound faster.

“H-Hey…” Naegi-kun’s face looked shocked, his entire body had gone stiff and he opened his mouth. “H-He came in after us, do you know him? If you do, by chance, know him… could you do me a favour and tell him to let go of me… ?”

“U-Unfortunately, it seems like I’ve got no idea who he is…” I answered him.

“Oy, what was that?” The strange man growled in a low voice. “Don’t tell me you’ve forgotten me already? That’s a little… harsh, isn’t it?”

“… Y-You really do know him?” Naegi-kun asked in a puzzled voice, the man’s eyes drifted down to him suspiciously.

“Whether we have met before or whether it is simply fate… neither are of any concern to you. You’ve just been caught up in it all. In the end you just have bad luck.”

I quickly dropped my line of sight to my notebook, and looked for any

memories about this stranger - there was only one person who came to mind.

“Could you be… Madarai Isshiki-san?”

“… That’s right. Late that night in the central plaza I, Madarai, was killed by my own target.”

“Killed… by your own target?” Despite what he said, he looked completely uninjured to me -

“I am immortal.”

“… Eh?”

The man sensed my doubts, he smiled broadly and chuckled strangely.

Immortal?

What is this? A fantasy based novel?

“Um… you’re not being serious, are you?”

“You’re sure about that?”

“Erm… What do you mean?”

“I’m truly immortal. If I were not, I would be unable to explain how I am now uninjured…”

“Well I’m not sure about that, but how did you just change the genre to something like a war based game…”

“Um, can I speak for a moment?” Naegi-kun cut in. “T-The guy who came in after us… Madarai-san, was it? Um… if you are Madarai-san, you couldn’t mean you’re Madarai-san from the student council?”

“Eh, student council?” I said without thinking.

Somehow, I could not see this creepy man dressed in all black, in the student council.

“Hmmm, I see. The boy knows…” Madarai grimaced and closed his eyes before murmuring something. “… That’s right. I’m a survivor from the student council.”

“S-Survivor?”

"… You're still pretending to be innocent after so long?"

Madarai opened his eyes, and stared at me carefully.

"It's because of 'that incident' all this happened. That incident is the reason behind the state of the student council now. I had luckily escaped with my life but everyone else had…"

No, that's not it - Madarai shook his head, as if trying to disprove his own words.

"… Perhaps it's wrong for me to say it was lucky I survived. It's more correct to say I simply remained alive. Yes, that's it, I luckily remained alive. I was not even given the chance to fight… and for that, I shall not just forgive them. I will absolutely not forgive them of stealing my chance to protect the student council. Who was it? Who did it?" Madarai spat out as he clenched his hands around Naegi-kun's shoulders. The boys face distorted with pain, but he still attempted to object, despite his discomfort.

"E-Excuse me, I don't really know the details but… I understand you feel angry about what happened to the student council… and I understand that you hate the person who did this, but I think it might be good to instead consider rebuilding the student council before anything else…"

"Rebuild it? Me?" Madarai scoffed, "Nah. In the first place, why do you even think someone like me belongs in the student council?"

"…… Eh?"

"I was only elected so the other members would be able to relax. After all, I'm only the 'Super High School Level Bodyguard'. I did what I could for the student council. In the past, now, and forever, I am just 'a protector'. That's all…" I heard Madarai grind his teeth, his voice was filled with bitter hatred. "During that… time of emergency, I was not fit to help them. I wasn't even a target during the incident. Perhaps the criminal did not consider me to be a member of the student council? Can you even imagine how humiliating this has been for me? I wasn't even given a chance to utilize my own talent. The feeling I had from having my own talent trampled on was… Oy, you bastards better be imagining what it felt like so you can relate…."

Madarai gripped Naegi-kun's shoulders even more tightly. The pain the young man felt only increased, and he yelled out.

"… Now I can only protect the remaining dignity of the student council. It will not end until I've atoned for the student council… I must confront it. That's why I must exact revenge. I am no longer able to slack off. I am willing to do… anything."

The man's eyes were stained red, not focusing on anything anymore. In any case the man seemed completely settled on the idea of pushing his point.

"I d-don't… know anything about what happened…" I ended up trying to excuse myself for whatever actions I did. I felt an overwhelming fear come over me as I desperately tried to make an excuse to run away. "I d-don't have anything to do with the student council or know anything about any incidents that happened… or anything dangerous of that sort at all… I-I'm just an innocent bystander!"

"As if…" Madarai disagreed, he sounded like he way making a death threat to his worst enemy. "We talked about it earlier. You know all about that incident."

"I r-really don't know anything about it! If you think I'm lying… then please look at this notebook!" I opened 'Otonashi Ryouko's Memory Notebook' and waved it in front of Madarai. "I haven't written anything in here about it! This is my proof! I don't know anything about it and I have nothing to do with it!"

"Would you cut the crap already?" A voice overflowing with fury pierced through my notebook to me. "That notebook of yours doesn't prove anything… why are you hiding the truth? Are you the criminal's apprentice? Can't talk about it? Or maybe you're really-"

"I s-said I have nothing to do with it!" I suddenly screamed at him. I instantly regretted doing so. I only added fuel to the fire. I thought he'd be really angry at me… but it seems like my prediction was way off mark, in fact his face was surprisingly blank.

"……." His emotions had flatlined, he didn't even blink. Any concept of time around the man had come to a complete stop. Naegi-kun sensed Madarai's malice and looked behind him timidly. "…… Come to think of it, I haven't heard this boy's name yet, have I?" He remained expressionless, only his mouth moving.

"I-I'm… Naegi Makoto…"

Hearing that, Madarai laughed softly and leaned down to speak in

Naegi-kun's ear.

"Say, Naegi-kun. Were you listening to what I was saying before?"

"… Huh?"

Madarai suddenly released Naegi-kun's shoulders only to place both of his hands on either side of Naegi-kun's head.

"Ah… !!" Naegi-kun's face instantly morphed into a terrified expression.

"I said earlier, didn't I? I am willing to do anything for vengeance." Madarai looked like a demon as he opened his mouth - he smiled and laughed, his voice full of poisonous venom.

This is bad. That guy is incredibly dangerous!

Somehow, I was only left with the ability to shiver and tremble like a frightened little bunny - I have no choice but to make a run for it… and quick!

CHAPTER 3

“You’re not thinking of running, are you?”

“… Eh?” My foot suddenly stopped in midair.

“If you do that… what do you think will happen to this boy here?”

“… Eh? Eh?” As I heard this, Naegi-kun’s face changed from blue to white. Wow, what a colourful face he has!

“This is the last warning you get… so watch yourself. If you don’t obey me, this guy’s head will be tragically crushed in an unfortunate accident.”

“Wh-what the…” I could only feel confused, both of them looked at me.

Say something - Madarai’s stare intimidated me, like he was about to do something reckless.

Help me - Naegi-kun’s eyes pleaded to me.

Intimidating eyes and pleading eyes.

Both were entirely focused on me and…

What a bother.

It was a bother to go to the hassle of doing either. There’s nothing I would really be able to do, or wanted to do, I guess. That’s why for me this was something that had…

“Nothing to do with me…”

That’s right, it has nothing to do with me. Sure, I happened to be swept along with the current, but that’s all, I wasn’t involved with the creation of this situation at all. I don’t even know anything about what happened, that’s why it has…

“Nothingtodowithmenothingtodowithmenothingtodowithmenothingtodowith
I mumbled quietly, reminding the people in front of me, as well as just myself. I was mumbling my magical enchantment.

“Huh?”

“Huh?” Having heard that, both Madarai and Naegi-kun looked at me with vacant expressions.

“What do you mean by it has nothing to do with you…?” A confused Madarai raised his voice. “There’s no way you’re not involved… after it’s your fault this boy here has been caught up in all this.”

“You’re wrong,” I found myself replying flatly, “I’m not the reason as to why he became involved in this whole thing, he got himself involved, it’s not my fault he has god-awful luck. In the end I really have nothing to do with this.”

“H-Hey, wait a-” As Naegi-kun tried to interrupt me I raised my voice to continue my argument.

“It’s a shame, but it’s obvious Naegi-kun has no luck at all,” I said in the calmest tone I could muster, “He just has an insane power to take and give life because of his complete lack of luck. So, I think you have no choice but to give up.”

Anyway, no matter what the case is, I’ve already forgotten. After all, I forget everything sooner or later, with the exception of Matsuda-kun. So, as far as I see it, there’s not really much out there that actually does have anything to do with me - I continued to mutter to myself these words, in all truth I really had nothing to do with it.

Then I’ll forget that too. My brief meeting with Naegi-kun, the information he knew, I’ll forget that as well. There’s no reason for me to feel bad about him. So that’s why I always say this has nothing to do with me.

“… Have you decided what you’re going to do?”

“I don’t know. I keep telling you this has nothing to do with me.” I answered blankly.

“Is that so? I see,” Madarai bared his teeth, murmuring in a low voice, “I hope you’re prepared to see the extent of my resolution.”

There really are strange people who are ready to go as far as to kill another human in order to prove their point. It’s insane to think he would accomplish anything by killing Naegi-kun.

Naegi-kun really doesn’t have any luck.

He’s gotten himself into a hostage situation after all.

“This is the end.” Madarai gripped Naegi-kun’s skull with all the strength in his hands and-

“… You’re wrong!” A voice resounded throughout the room that seemed to dissolve the tension in the air. A crazy person ran into the lab. The figure appeared to slide towards Madarai, and hammered the back of their fist into the man’s nose, making it bend to a strange angle. Madarai squinted his eyes shut in pain. He seemed to lose sight of his attacker as he fell down.

After giving Madarai’s chest a prod the stranger turned to Naegi-kun and grasped his head in their hands before moving to pick Naegi-kun up. They placed him gently on top of the bed and turned around - Madarai flew towards them. The stranger gracefully roundhouse kicked and hit Madarai square on the chin. The blow completely smashed his keypoint and rocked his head violently, he fell the the ground, having no energy left.

By the way, this scene I just witnessed, it passed in the blink of an eye. The stranger skillfully landed without making a sound after they finished their kick. Their skirt gently floated down - oh, they’re a she?

“I-Ikusaba-san!” Naegi-kun called out from the bed in relief.

Ikusaba-san - it seems like that is this girl’s name. Of course, this is the first time I’ve heard her name.

Naegi-kun got up from the bed and ran hurriedly to the girl.

“T-thank you, Ikusaba-san! Thank you so much!” He said, thanking her over and over again. However, the girl remained completely calmed and composed in response. Well I say calm and composed, but I think it’s more like she just didn’t feel anything.

“I was only helping my classmate…” she mumbled quietly to herself. Stubbornly, Ikusaba-san avoided his gaze. But it’s odd, looking at her now, you wouldn’t guess she had just been fighting brilliantly only a few moments beforehand.

“Ah… but Ikusaba-san, why are you here?”

I must admit I was wondering the same thing, usually it’s only Matsuda-kun in this lab - that’s what I had written down in my notes, also it seems like he’s absent today, but he has been getting a multitude of visitors. Maybe he’s been working on something big?

“Oh… um…” Ikusaba-san raised her voice slightly, but it was barely above a whisper, I listened carefully. “… I was just passing by?”

“Eh, why’d you phrase it as a question?” I asked without thinking.

“… Ikusaba-san, you haven’t changed one bit,” Naegi-kun interrupted. “… So then, you were just passing by when you came across what was happening and you came to save us, right?” Ikusaba-san nodded in response.

“That’s it… and you saved me. I was getting worried for a moment there… Thank you, Ikusaba-san. Thank you so much!” Naegi-kun sighed a breath of relief and continued to repeat his sincere thanks, much to Ikusaba-san’s embarrasment.

“I was really lucky… you were just passing by… I was so lucky…”

Luck - somehow that was how we were saved. Pure luck. But that is only in a manner of speaking. All thanks to such a strong person who was passing by we were able to escape from such a predicament but…

This luck was really convenient and good.

On the other hand though, Madarai’s actions were inconvenient to say the least.

Ah, so this is Super High School Level Good Luck?

But if it is luck, I can’t help but feel that it was all because of it that we were caught up in all this.

“Excuse me.”

“… Eh?” I suddenly realised Ikusaba-san was standing right in front of me. “AWAWAWA!!” I leapt back without thinking. Now that I think about it, did I really not notice her? Did she teleport?

“……” For some reason Ikusaba remained silent.

“……” I waited for her to show any signs of opening her mouth to speak, but I ended up giving in and raising my own voice.

“Um, nice to meet you… thank you very much for earlier.”

“Eh?” Naegi-kun raised his voice in surprise. He walked to us, invading our line of sight as he blinked in surprise - But what was so

surprising?

"… I'm Ikusaba Mukuro" I tilted my head to the side slightly, in response, Ikusaba-san raised her voice a little more, "I'm the 'Super High School Level Soldier' from the 78th batch… Nice to meet you." Without even blinking, she moved her mouth as little as possible as she introduced herself. The moment she finished she returned to utter silence.

"……"

Speaking honestly, she seemed like a quiet girl by nature. Then again, she is a Super High School Level Soldier, she probably acts like this around everyone - perhaps every soldier is like this? However I haven't met any members of the military before so I have no way of knowing. I just don't know…

"……." I was in silence with her.

"……." Even Naegi-kun was silent, but he was as puzzled as before.

"……." Madarai, still foaming at the mouth was, of course, silent too.

Everyone was silent.

An awkward silence.

But the awkwardness didn't last long. After some time, I forgot about the awkward silence. Instead, another thought wandered into my mind.

Ah, now that I think about it, Matsuda-kun isn't here.

That's right. The only thing I can ever remember is Matsuda-kun.

I wonder if Matsuda-kun is on an errand.

I want to see him soon. I hope he comes back quickly.

My thoughts continued as I stared into space and-

"…..!" The girl crouched down suddenly… Um, I think her name was Ikusaba-san.

"W-What's wrong?" The surprised boy, Erm, Naegi-kun I think, asked.

The girl replied in a warning tone.

"… Someone's there." The atmosphere of the lab became much more tense.

"Eh? Hiding…?"

"Sorry for interrupting. I wasn't trying to hide! But you shouldn't spread rumours about people!" A voice rose and everyone instinctively looked around the lab.

"… Huh?" But no matter how hard we looked, there wasn't anyone there.

"No, I'm here! Look look, over here!"

"Eh? W-Where…?" Feeling somewhat panicked I continued looking around the room restlessly.

"O-Over there!" Naegi-kun pointed out, Ikusaba-san walked to the laboratory door.

"Ah!" I noticed a little later than the others, in front of the door stood a boy with a pure, innocent face.

"Oh, you finally noticed me?" The boys face lacked any distinctive features, his voice also had a complete lack of any unique tones. "It took you a little while but you noticed me in the end… Well, it's my talents fault so it can't be helped… I'll forgive you."

"W-Why's there a kid here?!" Naegi-kun suddenly said, taken aback by the boy.

"Hey, hey, you shouldn't treat me like I'm a kid. I don't think it's rare to see someone with a baby face but I'm a meritorious high school student at Hope's Peak Academy! I even went to the trouble of using a difficult word, like 'meritorious'… oh, what's all this then?" The boy's line of sight fell to where Madarai was, "Oh my, oh my… looks like you've gotten yourselves into quite a mess…"

"Ah! Y-You're wrong about that!" Naegi-kun quickly ran in between the boy and Madarai, trying to obstruct his view, "H-How to put it… it might look like a slight accident but…"

The boy patted his hand on Naegi-kun's shoulder.

"Ah, don't fret. There's no need to make excuses around me. I'm

actually also investigating this case… Isn't that right, big sis?"

"Eh?" Despite having the reigns of his great story handed over to me, I didn't remember anything about it at all. I wasn't able to muster any more than, "I guess so?" and tilt my head to the side.

"… Huh? Don't tell me, you've forgotten about me again?" he folded his arms and nodded happily, "Well, I'm used to people forgetting who I am so it's fine. It's just another side-effect of my talent. Look, I said I have no presence, didn't I? People don't notice me very often, and they say that they forgot about me a lot… but you know, Big Sis," The boy started rubbing his hands and raised his voice again, "I have a request that this time when I say my name you remember it! My name is Kamishiro Yuuto! I'm a "Super High School Level Spy" from the 77th batch!"

"W-Wait… a second…" I protested as the boy came closer to me, I opened up 'Otonashi Ryouko's Memory Notebook' and tried to quickly find any memories mentioning the boy, "Ah, I got it! Kamishiro-kun! I remember you! Kamishiro-kun with absolutely no unique features whatsoever!"

"I wouldn't say none…" murmured Ikusaba-san with a neutral expression, "He looks like a doll made by someone with the creativeness of a politician, he gives off bad vibes…" I didn't think she was the type to say things so bluntly.

Kamishiro-kun glared at Ikusaba-san for a moment before returning his stare to me and then said in a very over-the-top voice.

"Weeeeell theen!! It's really awful that you're so forgetful, big sis! When you first told me I thought you were joking I almost laughed, haha!"

"W-Wait… That isn't something you should confess in front of a person… !!" having heard him, Naegi-kun quickly interjected but Kamishiro-kun payed him no mind.

"Ahaha, I don't need to be careful. I've always thought being careful was for losers. But, I don't think you have any experience with that, do you, big bro… you see, I understand completely," Kamishiro-kun slipped past Naegi-kun and stood in front of me and made sure we were face to face before saying any more, "You really are amazingly forgetful. saying such ditzy things don't really fit you, but I like it. Actually, there are a lot of girls out there who have ditzy personalities now that I think about it… in fact, my equipment down below gets a

little harder just talking about them!"

We all blinked in surprise. The culprit was of course the blunt explicit adult joke.

"Well, in any case she's my client so I'm genuinely relieved to see nothing happened to her. But, in the end…" Kamishiro-kun turned his line of sight back to Madarai, "No matter how much I think about it, I can't decide if this is a bad situation or not. I thought it really was. You know, they say my personality is warm and friendly enough to melt all the ice cream in a convenience store, though I suppose something like that is more of a pet peeve to some."I honestly can't make sense of this last bit.

"Erm, I think m-maybe it was overkill…" Naegi-kun once again began to apologise about this situation, "How to put it… perhaps it's better to say it was self-defence…"

"That's not what I meant." Kamishiro-kun said hitting him lightly, he slowly walked over to Madarai's body and mumbled to himself, "Honestly, talk about a worst case scenario… well, it won't solve anything anyhow. But when he wakes up, will you resort to violence again? What will you do? You can't just leave him here now can you?"

"Well… if we all go to the security department and explained-"

"We can't do that, big bro," He stared at Naegi-kun, analyzing him, "You do know I came all the way here just so I could have an important talk to big sis, my client? You understand? It's an important talk, got it? What I'm trying to say is we're too busy!"

"U-Um… but…" Naegi-kun was completely overpowered by Kamishiro-kun's icy-cold stare.

Unexpectedly, a voice sounded out throughout the room.

"I'll do something about it…" Everyone turned to look at Ikusaba-san. The girl quickly lowered her gaze to the ground and repeated herself, "I-I'll do something about it…"

"And you can do it by yourself?" Kamishiro-kun asked, drawing closer to her. The girl nodded. "The heck, do you even understand me!" The next moment, Kamishiro-kun's eyes sparkled brightly, "I see, I see. I get it now! You can take care of all this by yourself? Hm, hm, hearing that really puts my mind to ease! Ah, by the way, it would be better not to mention this to the security department. Since it'll be difficult

to deal with them."

"W-Wait a second!" Naegi-kun interrupted him again. "If we don't properly explain the situation, Ikusaba-san will be blamed."

"Huh?" Kamishiro-kun remained staring intently at Naegi-kun. I couldn't imagine his young face anymore and felt myself get hot, Naegi-kun remained dead silent. "You still don't get me even though I've said it a million times already? Big sis and I are busy. We have no time to help you clear this up. You side characters can go ahead and do it without our permission. In the first place, since you are the guys resorted to such a violent solution, it makes you the bad guys. If it were me, I would have done a much better job."

He continued to prattle on about his self importance. Naegi-kun could find any words to reply with but somehow he had not yet lost his head.

Ikusaba-san murmured a little more.

"It's okay… I'll do something about it so…"

"I-Ikusaba-san!"

"…. It's fine," with a short sentence, Ikusaba-san managed to silence the worrying Naegi-kun.

Kamishiro-kun and I turned to one another and he muttered, "It might be good to head off now…"

"Well then, it's decided!" Kamishiro-kun had an innocent smile on his face and he clapped his hands happily. "Leave the job to big sis over there… idiotic big sis and I are gonna go somewhere else!"

Kamishiro-kun grabbed my hand and with a quick, "Yay, let's go, let's go!" he started acting like a child dragging his poor parents to the toy store.

"W… Wait a mo-"

"It's fine, it's fine! You want to go back to your peaceful old life, don't you, big sis? So you should just quieten down and come with me!" Kamishiro-kun continued dragging me along behind him until we reached the door of the lab, I looked back hopelessly. The ever expressionless Ikusaba-san and Naegi-kun looking worried again stood up.

Naegi-kun took a single step. He had a look of determination. He quickly became startled however - Ikusaba-san had laid her hand on his shoulder. He looked back to her, she warned him and nodded softly. Seeing that Naegi-kun seemed to give in, relaxing his shoulders. He turned to look at me once more - the two figures disappeared in the distance.

“Now then, let’s move on and do our beeeeest!!” The moment we entered the hallway, Kamishiro-kun excitedly cheered. “Let’s solve your probleeeem!!”

Kamishiro-kun continued to walk, leaving me behind.

“… Ah, wait for me!” I called out as I hurriedly ran after him - but, my mind was drifting elsewhere.

I was thinking about Naegi-kun looking at me for that last moment. His eyes sent me a burning feeling of unease. The individual named Naegi Makoto gave me a sense of unreliability and had a weak demeanor - but in the depths of his eyes at that moment, there was an incredible strength from his very core that shook all my previous preconceptions of who this person was. He looked at me with a dazzling aura. Whether there was a problem, whether he had an unbeatable enemy, he always would have a strength so strong he could never give up.

Such an unforeseeable person looked straight at me with those eyes. I don’t understand how I can feel this way around such a strange, mysterious force. However, I doubt I’ll ever need to know. After all, he has nothing to do with me, but that’s not just a reason I’m using because it suits me, I just feel as though he basically has nothing to do with me. For example, as if we were in alternate dimensions, surely Naegi-kun’s story and my own story will never cross paths again. In conclusion we have nothing to do with each other.

I felt like that for some reason.

So, I’ll forget that boy with a reason, that was what I had concluded as I walked down the biology building hallways.

In fact, in just a matter of minutes - I completely forgot of his existence.

CHAPTER 4

Red eyes.

The whites of the eyes seemed almost painted red. The eyes turned towards their companion, Matsuda Yasuke muttered a questioned.

“… How long have you been conscious?”

After blinking for a strangely long time, the person on the bed - ‘Super High School Level Student Council President’, Murasame Soushun opened his mouth slowly. His lips were parched and made a dry sound as he opened his mouth.

“… Always,” His voice was quiet and hoarse. He sounded like a completely different person in comparison to before.

“So that’s how it’s been…” Matsuda let a grin creep into his expression. He turned to his friend showing a friendly smile. “But don’t you think it’s stupid to trick me like that?”

However Murasame did not make a sound. His eyes showed no emotion as he stared at Matsuda. Matsuda continued in his joking tone to help calm the tense atmosphere.

“It must have taken a lot of acting on your part. Your actual physiological symptoms and echos of such have almost completely disappeared… yet you were easily able to cease being a normal person. We wouldn’t have been in this situation had I not seen through your act.”

“Why did you come?” But his reply almost came with a violent attitude.

As if giving up, Matsuda’s expression returned to a more sober look.

“You said that earlier. You asked those ancient artifacts from the steering committee that. I want you to find out… whether you really woke up or not.”

In response Murasame only looked away, redirecting his attention to the ceiling and blinking without meaning.

“To be honest… even I’m having my doubts…” Matsuda licked his dry lips before continuing, “What if… I told those people that you’re

awake?"

Murasame remained silent to Matsuda's questioning. Like a remote controlled car with a flat battery, his reactions were slow and sluggish at best.

Maybe it isn't just acting.

Matsuda breathed out a deep sigh - he just answered his own question.

"Still, I'm sure the news will surprise them. After that… I already guessed what would happen. Didn't they used to say when people needed to prepare for the worst… 'Desperate times call for desperate measures'? At the moment they're relying entirely on influential people outside the school to cover up this incident," Matsuda looked away from Murasame and slowly gazed at his surroundings. Instead of looking for some kind of reaction from Murasame, he turned to the surrounding electronic equipment, as if trying to communicate with it, "After all… they can't afford to make up excuses for this. Like allowing a known threat into the general public, they can't just pretend there's no danger. There are also people who say who say a ruthless person cannot be a good researcher… well, not that it matters. It depends on how much talent there is."

Matsuda stayed talkative and Murasame didn't even shift an eyebrow. Murasame Soushun used to be the kind of person who would at least pretend to laugh no matter how bad the joke was - it seemed like that man was no longer there.

The issue isn't that he's feeling depressed.

As Matsuda sighed, he brushed his hair out of his face. His long, narrow eyes looked sharply at Murasame.

"Oy, Murasame. This isn't a bargaining point, but I do want to tell you… I'm saying this to make sure you understand, the school's intentions and the steering committee's intentions are very different. To be truthful, I don't care what those guys think. I just want to know what the hell is happening at this school. So then I-"

"I'm just pretending…" Murasame suddenly opened his mouth. Matsuda saw him smile - or maybe he imagined it. In the next moment, any trace of it had completely disappeared. The reaction he just gave him, proved that good person was still there.

There might be some more to this.

Matsuda took off his jacket and untucked his worn out white shirt, returning to his more familiar appearance. It wasn't because he had become more relaxed. If anything it was just the opposite. It felt more like he was just getting down to business.

"I get it, I don't think you'll be able to escape by just using this act. Even though you're in this state, you're still worried about this school… and you're willing to fight for it? That's why you're using this act, so you can escape from the eyes of the steering committee?"

Matsuda sat down on the bed, and leaned in to say something.

"If I were you, I'd be trying to get used to this kind of power. I'll protect you if I have to. Once I give my false report to those guys, you might even be able to fight along with them. Since it's not always that bad to fight alongside the bad guys…"

Matsuda once again asked how Murasame's condition was - only to see Murasame would not reply or react.

"No matter what the force behind it is, I still don't know very much about the incident. That's why I need you to survive and explain it to me, but…" Murasame lowered his eyelids slightly - At the very least, from what Matsuda could gather, his slight movement meant refusal. Matsuda thought this would be the case but he had a more pressing question. Though he didn't particularly want to hear the answer which may be given, because it was something he had been told before.

"The culprit is… Kamukura Izuru, correct?" That was his question, "I heard about it from the staff members, the name of the person who survived the incident and then went missing afterwards is called Kamukura Izuru. But, does that person… really exist?"

After a short silence, Murasame finally opened his mouth.

"Kamukura Izuru… killed the… student council…" His voice was hoarse and unused, but he conveyed his message.

"… So then, Kamukura Izuru is real?" Matsuda listened for confirmation however Murasame didn't reply. His mouth remained open, stiff and unmoving.

"Oy, Murasame…" Matsuda called out, urging him on, the boy's mouth finally moved again.

"… Whatever." He finished saying only that. Matsuda sensed

something from his word.

So then, that doesn't matter.

There was no sense of crisis in the Hope's Peak Academy Murasame held onto. So then it isn't a known fact whether Kamukura Izuru is the culprit behind the incident or not.

Matsuda's thoughts went along the lines of, 'That must be it!'

There was one more thing Matsuda needed to hear above all else - he had realised.

He breathed in heavily and before giving himself a chance to hesitate, he asked his question.

"What about Enoshima Junko? What connection does she have to the incident?"

Murasame closed his eyes. It was a blink that seemed to last forever. The next moment he opened his eyes again - his face was unfamiliar.

Tears were threatening to spill from his open eyes, he made a gritting sound with his teeth bared. His crazed expression turned into one of pure exhaustion.

Then Matsuda realised.

The person named Murasame Soushun was no longer there.

The man they called 'Super High School Level Student Council President' was completely gone.

The boy who was familiar to him had met his end.

"I-I-IIIIIIIIIIIIIIIII"

'That thing' opened it's mouth painfully wide - He began to spit out words that did not even sound like words.

"I-
IIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIImmmmmuuuuuuuuuuuussssssssssssttttttttttt….kkkkkkiiiiiiiiill
IIIIIIIIIImmmmmmmmmuuuuuuuuuussssssssssssttttttttttttt…
kkkkkkkkkiiiiiiiiiiiillllllllllllllllllllllllll!"

I must kill?

“Who? Who are you talking about?” Matsuda placed his hands on ‘that thing’s bedside and looked down to him as he asked. Huge, red, sore eyes turned towards Matsuda briefly.

“Enoshi…ma…Jun…….ko”

Enoshima Junko.

The inside of his body was beaten by something as he was overtaken by shock. It was the beating of his own heart. The harsh impact it had caused Matsuda to lose his own voice.

Suddenly, ‘that thing’ screamed out.

“…
AAAA

Something around his lower abdomen begun to bubble and boil. Still hot, his whole body became energetic. Matsuda turned to Murasame.

“Hey… I said earlier that I’d protect you if I had to, didn’t I?” He spoke in a calm tone of voice, “But, there’s also someone else I have to protect at all costs. They’re hopeless if I don’t protect them… So, I’ve decided I’ll sacrifice anything to protect them.”

As the words left his mouth, they were swallowed by screams. Even so, Matsuda continued to talk.

“… I’m awful. I don’t particularly want to think about that. If I forgot the person I care for and if they died… that thought is unbearable… So I’ll protect them. No matter what happens I’ll protect them.”

As Matsuda spoke softly, he placed both of his hands around ‘that thing’s neck.

“KILLKILLKILLKILLKILLKILLKILLKILLKILLKILLKILLKILLKILLKILLKILLKILLKILLKI

Even so ‘that thing’ continued to shout out. He didn’t seem to understand what was happening.

If there’s a grudge against me for this, then there’s a grudge against me.

Matsuda closed his eyes, and thought to himself.

I don’t mean that person, I mean I’ll hold a grudge against myself.

In the next moment, Matsuda gathered all his power into his hands and squeezed.

Finally the incredibly loud voice, the screams of ‘that thing’ had come to a stop.

The bed to which he was assigned started to shake with a loud rattling sound.

Matsuda was leaning forward, his hair falling in front of his eyes. However he didn’t loosen his grip. Instead he tightened it, he put all his power into his hands.

Quickly, the bed’s shaking subsided. The feeling of what his hands were wrapped around disappeared.

The feeling of ‘that thing’ ending.

After a while, Matsuda finally opened his eyes again. All the muscles in his body felt exhausted and tense, as if he had become a solid piece of iron. Sweat dripped from his forehead, landing on his long eyelashes.

He blankly turned his line of sight towards ‘that thing’ on top of the bed. The light from those eyes had disappeared - all that was left was a deep darkness.

Those eyes held a darkness deeper than the colour of darkness itself.

CHAPTER 5

In one of the East District's cafeteria's.

It's de facto name is "The Third School Cafeteria". Although there are several cafeterias scattered throughout the campus, this is the most popular by far… apparently.

During noon, it's filled not only students but also teaching staff lined up in a queue. It seems the secret behind the popularity of this cafeteria is the student they call 'Super High School Level Cook' who boasts of his own unique recipe. His food isn't governed by genre or common sense, and I hear it's so addictive you can't help but feel like it must contain drugs but-Come to think of it, it doesn't really matter since I've forgotten how addictive it is.

Well, in any case! Even now the student cafeteria is filled with students so there wasn't a single seat available. For someone like me standing by myself, this atmosphere was anything but comfortable-

"I'm here too, you know!"

"Eh, did you hear me? Um…"

"I told you, I'm the 'Super High School Level Secret Agent" from the 77th batch, Kamishiro Yuuto! Come on!! How many times do I have to introduce myself?!" Kamishiro-kun said as he made a cross shape with his arms in front of me, "Damn it, it seems like we have bad chemistry, I was praying to god a lot that we'd be a good combination… too bad."

"What kind of god were you praying to… ?"

In any case, it seems Kamishiro-kun and I certainly do have bad chemistry.

Forgettable Kamishiro-kun and forgetful me.

He was holding what looked to be a mixture of pale calpis and water.

"Well, whatever! What's more important is starting our conversation!"

"Right, we can do that but…" I looked around at the student's bustling through the cafeteria, "Why come here of all places?"

Kamishiro-kun waved his short finger in front of me with a tsk tsk tsk.

“It’s bad taste to answer such a question to an outsider, if anything this is the perfect place for it. If we talked about this in a place with only a few people, someone would be able to overhear us easily. It’s a theory I have that we should hide like we’re extras in an adult video.”

“So what you’re saying is if we need to talk about something important, we should pretend we’re having a normal chat.”

“What I’m saying is, it’d be lonely if I was here by myself!”

Our casual conversation was buried in the sound of the hustle and bustle around us.

“See! No one cares about our conversation, do they?” Kamishiro-kun had a huge grin on his face like he had just committed some fantastic prank. He then moved onto the main topic, “There’s a reason why I wanted to talk to you as soon as possible… Did anyone go to your room this morning, big sis?”

“Eh? Did they?”

“It’s fine if you’ve forgotten. Just check in your notebook.”

Surprised, I did as I was told and took out ‘Otonashi Ryouko’s Memory Notebook’ and looked through it.

“… Ah!” I remembered in no time at all. I couldn’t help but yell out as I remembered. “I-I remember! I know, it was Enoshima Junko! That girl suddenly came into my room!”

“Huuh.” Kamishiro suddenly leaned forward. “So then, that person really was Enoshima Junko. I knew it… yup, it seems like that wiretap I put in your room worked perfectly.”

Huh?

“Say, Kamishiro-kun?”

“Hm, what?”

“What did you say just now? Did you say… a wiretap?”

“Yeah I said that. I said wiretap. What about it?”

“… A wiretap?”

“Yes, it’s a common machine used for eavesdropping.”

I quickly stood from my chair.

“H-H-How is that normal?!” I screamed at the top of my lungs, “Normal, common people don’t use those machines!”

Kamishiro-kun’s face was as calm as ever.

“Let’s not rant on about the wiretap. It was crime prevention.”

“Wiretaps aren’t just used to prevent crimes!!”

“Ahaha, so you noticed! Clap, clap, clap!” As he verbally applauded me, he took out a giant paper bag from under his chair. The boy immediately shoved his hand into the bag and pulled out a sweet bread, “Ah, a Sugar Twist Doughnut!” As he cheered out by himself, he happily crammed it into his mouth.

“… That’s a little rude.”

“Hugha Fuwa Fughu.”

“I have no idea what you just said.”

Kamishiro-kun swallowed down the sweet bread that had been stuffed into his mouth.

“… I said, I don’t want you to misunderstand me, I didn’t just wiretap you, big sis. In a broader sense of speaking… I guess I wiretapped around this many people?” Kamishiro-kun held up all his fingers.

“Eeh! Ten people?!”

“Mmmm,” he shook his head, “A hundred people.”

“A… A hundred people!”

Each finger was to signify a unit of ten people!

“You can sit a hundred people on an Inaba Monooki shed no problem!”

(Inaba Monooki seems to be a Japanese storage company, Kamishiro just recited their catchphrase)

I was stunned at the unexpected amount of people he counted, he

continued to explain the reason why.

"… The reason is, I rotate between girls a lot basically, that way I can have fun with you when best suits you with the time of month… I guess that's why I like Heavy Rotation so much!" He puffed out his chest - No, that doesn't matter!

"In any case, how did you manage to wiretap one hundred people's rooms?"

"Ahaha, it's easy with my ability. Sneaking into places like the girl's toilets or their dressing room is a piece of cake!"

"Do something else with that piece of cake!"

"Making it nice and creamy, with extra cream!"

(This is all pretty confusing in English but he says doing things before breakfast in Japanese which is like saying it's a piece of cake, so Otonashi tells him to do something else before breakfast. He then says something is growing but I've heard the word he said can be used for ejaculation…)

Aaaah, this is already getting out of hand.

The hand, the leg, the head, the back - It's getting out of everything.

"Let bygones be bygones," the boy wiped away his problems with a simple phrase and started talking about a different subject, "When you big sisters are in a room you sure are noisy, aren't you? Because of that I could barely hear any of the conversation… So, why did Enoshima Junko come visit you? She came because she had an errand for you to run, didn't she?" As he said that, he took out another sweet bread, "Oh, a cub's paw made in Germany!" He looked like he was tasting a rare delicacy as he munched on it.

"Uuum, well that's…" My eyes dropped down to my notebook as I answered him, "It seems she came to give me a hint…"

"Hm? A hint?"

I flipped through my notebook.

"Erm… Enoshima Junko's purpose…"

Kamishiro-kun looked surprised at my words.

“Tell me in more detail. What did Enoshima Junko say her purpose was?” Kamishiro-kun asked with a more forceful voice. I read aloud my memories from my notebook, also feeling very tense.

“It seems like… Enoshima Junko has two purposes… the first is, ‘To crush Kamukura Izuru until nothing is left’… do you know what that means?”

“Keep going.” He coldly prompted, I looked back down to my notebook.

“Um, the second is…”

I read on ahead a little - and was shocked by what I read.

It was as if someone had killed me by pounding my spine with a hammer, I felt a sudden, intense shock surge through my entire body.

“… Big sis?”

“W-What the hell… It says, ‘Kill your beloved darling, Matsuda Yasuke’…”

As soon as I said it, my brain felt like it was having a nuclear meltdown, my surroundings began to rock from side to side. It wasn’t an earthquake. I, myself, was the one shaking. My head felt hot, unavoidably so, only my body was cold. I was stricken by the less familiar feelings of fear and anger all at once. I was shaking violently for reasons I could not understand.

“… Calm down, big sis.”

The inside of my head was numb with fear, there was a voice echoing quietly. I was brought back to my senses to find Kamishiro-kun saying something to me.

“The kill thing has to be a bluff… There’s no way a person can kill so lightly. If she really planned to kill him, she wouldn’t bother declaring it to you until long after murdering him. Am I right?”

That would be true. I know that. But I can’t stop my body from shaking.

“Y-y-y-you’re r-r-r-right-t t-t-there’s-s n-n-n-no w-w-way s-s-s-s-s-she’d-d k-k-k-kill h-h-h-him.” My voice was shaking so much, I almost couldn’t form a single word.

"… In the meantime, it might be better for you to just not say anything until you calm down," He said lazily as he gulped down the bread in his hand, "Instead, you should listen to my reasoning from now on," He announced loudly, "Ooookay, let's get a move on then!" Kamishiro-kun suddenly straightened his posture, enthusiastically - and he started the reasoning part, "Firstly, there's the problem of 'the advanced notice of Matsuda Yasuke's death' that you're so worried about… I suppose that's a bluff. I mean, there's no sense in telling others about a murder you have yet to commit. She may have been using it as a threat, but that's also unlikely… Hm, it's definitely a bluff. For now, that's our understanding of it. But… we should be more wary of the girl's first purpose."

Enoshima Junko's first purpose.

That's certainly-

"No… Even so, 'Crushing Kamukura Izuru until nothing is left' is… honestly, even I was a little surprised. It's too much of a coincidence, I didn't think I'd hear Kamukura Izuru's name…"

"Wh-wh-who's-s-s t-t-t-that-t?"

"Did you ask, 'Who's that person'?" Kamishiro-kun patted his chest with his hand, "They're the culprit," The boy leaned forward, over the table, and spoke in an excited voice, "I was surprised! Since Kamukura Izuru is the culprit behind The Worst, Largest Incident in Hope's Peak Academy's History!"

Eh? The culprit behind The Worst, Largest Incident in Hope's Peak Academy's History?

Speaking of which, what is The Worst, Largest Incident in Hope's Peak Academy's History?

I tilted my head to the side.

"Wait! I can tell by your reaction that you don't remember!" Kamishiro huffed and pouted, "It's boring to show of my deductions to other big sisters… but from now on I should expect your reaction when I tell you my reasoning," Kamishiro-kun really did look bored as he exhaled deeply, then he began to talk again, "When I told you the other day… you didn't remember then either but… you didn't even bother to ask me whether The Worst, Largest Incident in Hope's Peak Academy's History really happened or not, did you? But now I can say that with more confidence," Kamishiro-kun clicked his fingers right in

front of my eyes, “The Worst, Largest Incident in Hope’s Peak Academy’s History. Kamukura Izuru is the culprit behind the incident,” He wore a proud expression as he declared it. After a while of wearing that expression he spoke again, “…That wasn’t the reaction I was waiting for.”

He said his one sided excuses, as I tried to regain my composure.

“The reason as to why I believe this is the case is also why I called this meeting,” Kamishiro leaned over to face my ear and whispered in a small voice, “Actually, I overheard a conversation between faculty members…”

Overheard - somehow that filled me with a sense of dread.

“The people having the conversation were on school campus but they seemed to be very careful, they didn’t mind spilling out all their complaints when in their own private rooms though… like after a love affair, it was the no.1 most stale atmosphere. Honestly, those guys from office romances are scary.”

“Y-You don’t mean…!”

“Oh, it’s been a while since you last talked!”

Eh? Was it a while?

No, I wasn’t worried about that. More importantly-

“Oh my, As expected, I think the wiretap I installed in the female teaching staff’s room has been at least a little useful thus far. We should call this operation, ‘The Elite Female Staff Are Set Up With A Dilemma’! Ghuhahahaha!”

“I see… how nice.” Understandably, my reaction ended up seeming pretty idiotic.

“In any case, the pieces of the puzzle are starting to come together. The Worst, Largest Incident in Hope’s Peak Academy’s History, Kamukura Izuru and Enoshima Junko… Once we find what the connection between them is, we’ll be able to solve this case.”

“So then, it’ll only take a little longer?”

“Yeah, just a little…” Kamishiro-kun’s expression became shrouded, “Putting it another way, we just need to take one more step… here’s

my prediction, once we connect one more piece all the secrets will be revealed. If that happens, we'll understand soon afterwards…"

There's only one piece left… ?

"So, are you going to talk to this Kamukura Izuru person? They're the culprit, aren't they?"

Kamishiro-kun made a troubled face, tilting his head to the side at my question.

"Hmmm, I don't think I can. After all, no one knows where they are…"

"Don't know where they are… So they're missing?"

"I wouldn't call it missing per se," Kamishiro-kun's face only became more and more troubled, his tone of voice became more serious, "The human named Kamukura Izuru isn't a member of the regular school, the preparatory school or the teaching staff. In fact, I can't find any mention of that person's name anywhere in Hope's Peak Academy… No boys, no girls, no student graduated or presently attending."

"…Huh?"

No mentions anywhere - it's like they're a ghost.

"I think the most likely possibility is… someone wiped out the record clean… what nasty business. I believe it would have been someone inside the school, but not someone within the inner workings of the school, it's too risky for them."

"So then… there's an accomplice within the school?"

"It's strange though, for as long I have investigated it, I haven't found a single student who knows who the person called Kamukura Izuru is. The school began hiding them after the incident, so it would not be strange if there were students who know about them before the incident… However, I never thought there would be no sign of their existence from the very beginning."

"N-No way… they really are a ghost…"

"S-Stop that! They're not anything like a ghost!" Kamishiro-kun puffed out his cheeks, he looked really mad. Evidently, he disliked the turn the conversation took, "A-Anyway…" Kamishiro-kun cleared his

throat slightly, and readjusted his face to a more serious expression as he talked, “No matter what the reason is, if we don’t find out who Kamukura Izuru is, we may have no choice but to give up…”

“G-Give up!” I suddenly raised my voice - Kamishiro-kun shook his finger in front of my face with another tsk tsk tsk.

“It’s no good to jump to conclusions. As I was saying, we may have no choice but to give up coming at it from that perspective. If we can’t figure it out from that perspective, It’ll be better to come at it from a different perspective. It’s stupid to always look at things from one point of view. For example, if you only ever look at a middle schooler’s boobs, you’ll never see her ass.”

“I see! Thank goodness!” My reasonable reaction turned to an idiotic one and I replied overly cheerfully, “So, what’s the other perspective?”

“Enoshima Junko of course!”

Enoshima Junko - we always return to that girl’s name, I felt shivers go down my spine.

“Thanks to the conversation I overheard from the female staff, I finally understand. In what way Enoshima Junko is connected to The Worst, Largest Incident in Hope’s Peak Academy’s History,” Kamishiro-kun shot a quick glance to me - Checking my exceedingly weak reaction and he let out a large sigh, “It looks like you don’t remember but… other than being ‘the person who started the rumour of the incident’, it’s a mystery as to what other connection she has to The Worst, Largest Incident in Hope’s Peak Academy’s History. But it’s a mystery I’ve finally cracked. It seems, she’s the girl who discovered the incident.”

“Discovered it… but isn’t that suspicious?”

“Since this is a mystery novel, she’s primarily a suspect,” said Kamishiro-kun, nodding, “But, you know that, don’t you? She’s already been interrogated by the school.”

“Um… Interrogated…?”

“I told you! If you don’t remember check your notebook!” Kamishiro-kun was yelling like he was throwing a huge temper tantrum, I quickly read through my notebook.

“… Ah, I see. Enoshima Junko started to spread rumours immediately

following the incident, but didn't you say she was interrogated? But if she was released just after that… then that means she can't be the culprit!"

"Thanks to your awful conversation timing, I've come to a conclusion, big sis… Well, it's just as you put it. It seems like the interrogation was highly relentless, I was thinking it would have been impossible for her to escape-"

Kamishiro-kun suddenly stopped moving.

"What's wrong… ?"

"I see… that's it…" The boy's eyes widened, the corners of his mouth shook and trembled, "I understand now, big sis!" He shrieked excitedly, "We completely overlooked the most important part of it all… It really was best to ask you to help me out, big sis. You did great with the interactive mystery part!"

With uncontrollable excitement, he enthusiastically took another sweet bread out of the paper bag, as he bit into it he started to craft a new sentence - by the way, it was a jam bun.

"What I'm saying is, Enoshima Junko was interrogated by the school… that's where the last piece was hidden!"

"Eh? What do you mean?"

"Well you see, the information I heard while eavesdropping… the interrogation on Enoshima Junko was definitely incredibly thorough, there were things like polygraph testing and kinesics analysis, they started with cliche things like that, then something called 'brain fingerprinting' which is a slightly different to interrogating. But the thing with brain fingerprinting is it seems to be noted as being a more reliable lie detector than compared to the polygraph test… The point is, they were using tests that measured brain waves directly to see if she was lying… understand?"

"Not really… but it sounds incredible."

"That's right! It is incredible!" The corners of Kamishiro-kun's mouth twitched up into a smile, "Not just that but none of it would have been possible without an expert!"

"… An expert?"

“For the interrogation, it seemed the school requested a ‘certain student’ to assist them. Of course, I couldn’t find who the student was but… I finally realized. It would be difficult to utilize something such as ‘brain fingerprinting’ without an expert in the field, they needed to collaborate with someone… If they knew they would have no reason to imagine it. I’m saying there’s someone at this school who is familiar with the intricacies of the brain…”

“Eh… ?” At that exact moment, an awful thought came wandering into my head. I didn’t want it to come true, so I quickly tried to think of something else to distract me.

It has nothing t-

“You know him, big sis, he’s the ‘Super High School Level Neurologist’, Matsuda Yasuke!”

I heard something that sounded a short fuse behind my ear - my brain was drawing a blank.

“With the ‘death notice’ from earlier, I thought there was no mistaking there was a connection between Enoshima Junko and Matsuda Yasuke but… perhaps, Matsuda knew Enoshima’s weakness. Anyway, there must be a reason behind their connection, right? The school released Enoshima Junko from the interrogation way too easily!” He continued to talk on, with his eyes shining brightly, I found myself nodding in agreement to everything he said.

After he had spoken for approximately an age and a day, I couldn’t help but feel as though I had no energy remaining. Even so, Kamishiro-kun continued to talk. In contrast to his happy talkative nature, I was looked depressed at best.

“… The point being, I can’t help but feel as though Matsuda Yasuke may have been ‘the hidden last piece’, you know? I mean, do you think Enoshima Junko has been just obsessively aiming at the good relationship between Matsuda and yourself? Hey, if it really is how I think it is, then don’t you think that’s the connection?”

I’m not really thinking anything - I don’t know anything.

I don’t even know how the conversation turned to Matsuda-kun in the first place.

I don’t know. I don’t know. I don’t know. I don’t know. I don’t know.

I don't know about these overwhelming reasons, it's impossible that everything has a reason behind it - I stopped writing in my notebook.

Because my self-defence is working.

If something came and threatened my world, I'd be happier if I just forgot about it. Because if I forget about it, that means I have nothing to do with it - and it protects my world.

So, I'll look away from life's inconveniences and misfortunes. I'll chase after my world with all the strength I carry. I've cast away my feelings of self-hatred and guilt. Because I'll always forget, whether or not I turn away from the truth.

And so, I have nothing to do with the things I forget -

That's my self-defense.

"… Yeah, I really do feel like we'll solve this soon."

I suddenly realised, as Kamishiro-kun continued to talk to himself, he was drawing nonsense shapes on top of the table.

"Say, big sis… It seems like the end to your issue is coming soon too. After I solve it, it'll be time for you to get ready to reward me. Polish that fine-ass body. I like to imagine that despite your cute face, at night you're really the Aburenbou Shougun, aren't you? Is that it? I bet you are."

After he finished his one-sided conversation, he got up from his chair, though it looked more like he was jumping up and down on it.

"Alright! We're on the home run now!" After yelling out an encouraging shout, he turned around, "I'm sure, next time we meet, big sis, I'll have solved this case!"

As he waved his hand, Kamishiro-kun departed from the table. However, after only walking a few steps, he stopped.

"Oh, right, right," He looked back, with an expression that told me he had remembered something, "If you don't want to be sitting around doing nothing, you could look into Matsuda Yasuke's small problem. Well, it doesn't matter how much you look into it, he won't be killed or anything but… I thought it would be good to mention it just in case. Still, I don't know what sort of secret connection Matsuda Yasuke and Enoshima Junko have, but it's better to be careful."

Secret connection?

Enoshima-san and Matsuda-kun - have a secret connection?

What the heck?

What the heck? What the heck? What the heck? What the heck? What the heck? What the heck? What the heck?

I was attacked by a wave of anxiety, my chest tightened in pain, I felt scared of everything, I was just exhausted.

"… Anyway, it's about time we reached the climax - You should get ready, big sis, anything could happen."

Kamishiro-kun finished his warning and turned away, this time he disappeared into the school cafeteria's crowd like a ghost.

Thus, I was left alone in the school cafeteria. I was still feeling exhausted, for the time being I decided on just concentrating on taking several deep breaths. There was no reason for it. I was simply stalling time. The time to solve the mystery. Time always relentlessly continued in a steady stream. That's why I spent this time taking in deep breaths.

And I forgot.

I forgot everything, perfectly.

Very soon, I couldn't remember why I was taking in such deep breaths, how strange.

"Well, whatever!"

There was no more that I could forget. From that point on I was bright, cheerful and brimming with positivity. Without so much as a backward glance, I walked to the future, filled with hope. I picked up my notebook from the surface of the table, and with plenty of momentum, I stood from my chair and-

"… Huh?"

I felt lightheaded - or maybe a little different to that.

I suddenly grabbed the table with my hand.

I looked to where I was looking previously, the words in my notebook

danced around the page, distorting themselves. At that moment, I shivered and felt like a horde of insects was crawling up my back, my knees buckled, I thought briefly about what was happening and soon found I was sitting on the chair again.

The inside of my head was stained with a metallic grey, my mind was completely blank.

I'm tired.

My eyelids became heavy, and my face slackened, the world circling me was quickly disappearing. The busy, noisy students around me were vanishing, the human shapes surrounding me were all melting together.

It was as if I had been poisoned or hypnotised, I couldn't move a single finger.

It was in that complete stillness, that I suddenly heard a voice.

"Upupu."

What an ominous laugh.

It was strange, yet sounded so familiar.

"What's this? Did you actually remember me? I'm happy! Despite your awful habit of forgetting things you still remembered me… That's right, it's 'Super High School Level Despair'. It's been a while, upupupu."

Why can I remember?

Why did I remember them?

Even so I remembered someone. Before, this voice told me something.

Let's meet up again! Then I'll kill you properly!

Suddenly I was looking upwards, before my eyes was a giant shadow standing over me. The shadow had a familiar face. But I couldn't recall any memory of the face. That familiar face stared intensely at me, like it was trying to look past my skin. Their irises were coloured by darkness itself. It was like their eyes were despairing, even in despair. As I looked into these eyes, an unexpected thought popped into my head.

Ah, so I'll be killed by these eyes.

"Hmmm. Unfortunately I can't actually kill you this time either." they whispered to me, like they were answering my thoughts, "Once again, I can't kill you due to circumstances. Since you still haven't tasted enough despair. You need to taste an even more despair-inducing despair, you see!"

Suddenly, all the light surrounding me disappeared. At the same time, I noticed my eyelids were shut. The shadow seemed to cover my face completely.

"But, if you say you don't want to taste that despair… then it means war. If you don't fight despair, you'll never feel hope again."

Those were the last words I heard.

After that voices, sounds, everything had disappeared. As numbness took hold of my body, all my senses stopped working. I was completely still, I fell out of consciousness.

I fell out of it silently.

CHAPTER 6

The man walked to the girl's room quickly, it was clear the girl had not bothered to take the key from her door earlier. Despite this, there was no one inside the room. He swiftly opened the door, letting a rush of air into the room. Inside the room there was a poster on the wall which flapped noisily.

"… Why, why did she have to be out now?" He had told her to stay put, even when she had nothing to do - without realising it he felt like shouting obscenities at her.

That being said, the man had fully realised that there would have been no sense to be drawn from his words if he had done so. No matter what he said to her - that girl would just forget everything.

Letting out a large sigh, Matsuda Yasuke dropped his line of sight to where his hands were. His hands remained scrunched into tight fists. No matter how many times he tried to relax them, it was impossible. He had lost feeling in them long before, he could still feel Murasame Soushun's neck squeezed between his hands.

Murasame Soushun's sore, red eyes flashed through his mind suddenly. He squeezed his fists more - it was like his hands were still wrapped around the boy's neck, suffocating him of air.

"Why… did she have to be out now…?" He whispered in a much weaker tone than before as he left the room.

He exited the dormitory and soon Matsuda found himself heading towards the biology building in the east district. If he were her then he would be there. There wouldn't be another place a girl who had forgotten everything would be.

It wasn't even the height of summer yet but already the back of Matsuda's dirty shirt was drenched in sweat. Covered in perspiration, he felt like he was as heavy as lead. It should have taken around ten minutes to reach the biology building on a normal day, but this time it took at least twice the amount of time.

Even so, Matsuda somehow finally reached the biology building. Looking like a broken wind-up toy, he scaled the stairs in a strange, awkward waddle and within a few minutes was standing in front of the neurology research facility.

As he took a deep breath in he roughly opened the door.

He looked into the room with hope.

However, there was no one there.

It was still too early to be discouraged by this but an uncomfortable feeling stirred in him.

What happened here?

It had not been hidden well, there were traces of vandalism in there, on the desk, on the bed, all over the laboratory.

Don't tell me…

His expression changed as he quickly hurried over to the bed - Something moved under it, as if it had anticipated his actions.

"Who's there?!" As he instinctively raise his voice, he reached down and raised the bed sheet…

He saw a girl under the bed.

Matsuda felt his stab of anxiety ease with some relief. But within the next moment, that relief was blown away, like an explosion. Matsuda saw the bed thrown into the air. It drifted through the air, looking as though it was much lighter than what it truly was and soon began to spin around in a dizzying motion. After spun for an inconceivable amount of time it finally fell to the ground, like gravity had at last remembered it existed. The bed sheets, still in Matsuda's hand and flipped upwards and lightly grazed against his nose and floated back down to the ground.

A deep rumbling echoed through the room.

After the rumbling had come to a stop, Matsuda heard a voice, or more specifically, Matsuda heard a laugh.

"Ahahahahahahahahahahahahahahahahahahahahahahahahahahahahahahahahahahah
On the other side of the bed stood a girl from before, "Wow, talk about good reflexes. I wasn't expecting you to be there, I thought it was yet another idiotic girl. That girl from earlier had a stupid grin plastered to her face, and all the guys I've seen up to now in this place seem to smile like they're bonkers, but maybe their appearance was grandeur enough to make them at least a bit attractive."

“Y-You… ?!”

“That girl was trying to give him instructions, even if it was in a strange way, and that Matsuda guy asked her questions like he was ignoring her. He just wanted to hear about that girl. He wanted to know about her so much it was unbearable. He was so fascinated by it. He looked at her body over and over again like he was licking it all up. Then, naturally, it shouldn’t be surprising his dangly ronpa was all ho-”

“… For fuck’s sake!” Matsuda suddenly kicked the bed beside him, a metallic clanging echoed through the lab.

“Oh my, oh my, are you mad?” The girl continued smiling all the same, “But it’s me who wants to be angry… . Hey, why aren’t you looking at the ridiculously adorable face of one Enoshima Junko like a lust driven demon? Why is it? Hey, why aren’t you horny?”

As he heard the girl’s words, Matsuda remembered something.

“… I knew it, you really are weird!”

“Am I? But you see, this is really weird for me.”

“… That’s your real personality, isn’t it?”

“Wait… quit it with those comments about my personality…” Enoshima quickly switched to an offended tone of voice, “For sure, you’re making it sound like up until now I was just feigning innocence but… I’ve been making sure I keep at least one aspect of me the same. So you’ll know it’s me for sure no matter how I am. Still, since I bore easily, I pretty much hit the snooze button as soon as you got such a sloppy personality. Even still that-”

“What’s your purpose?” Matsuda interrupted Enoshima with a question. His expression changed to a glare.

“…Oh, getting serious? You won’t waste your time talking to the the ever famous Queen of Chatting, it’s like we’re in a saiyan battle, right?”

“Just answer me!” Frustrated, Matsuda raised his voice angrily, “What is it you want to achieve? Just what is it you’re trying to do?”

Enoshima tilted her head slightly to the side.

“Nothing really. I don’t want to do anything.”

“… What?”

“It’s too late, I shan’t do a thing. I’m not going to do a single thing, I have everyone else doing it for me. Guys like the student council, the headmaster or the steering committee… and also that girl who you absolutely adore… EEEEVERYONE is running around, doing my work.”

Hearing that, Matsuda’s face went dark red.

“You already know? What I’m doing…?”

“Whatever are you saying?” Enoshima raised her head, Matsuda looked down at her, “I’ve known what you were doing for a very long time now… You’ve been doing exactly as I intended you to do, so what are you saying? Hey, won’t you tell me?”

Matsuda clenched his jaw at her words. Seeing that, Enoshima quivered with an ecstatic look stuck to her face.

“Ahem… Matsuda-kun’s face sure is amazing right now. That despair-induced face you’re showing me, I’d like to see it more. Become more and more and more and more despair-induced!”

“Fuck… off…” Matsuda’s face contorted into rage.

Watching him, Enoshima snorted and chuckled, she placed her hands behind her back as she casually inspected her surroundings.

“Moving on though… Matsuda-kun, what is it you plan to do from now on?”

“… What do you mean?” He immediately responded.

Enoshima suddenly reached out and grabbed Matsuda’s wrist.

“Oh no, your hand is wounded. You weren’t scratched were you? It’s looks painful. Should I kiss it better?”

Matsuda quickly tried to pull away his hand but Enoshima held on tightly.

“Now let’s see, these scratches were caused by some other guy, weren’t they? It looks like he was probably an honour student. But he was terribly ill, and when he made this wound he was probably

bedridden with shock, wasn't he?"

"How… do you know that…?"

"I don't know, I just understand. Because it was all part of my plan," Enoshima brought her own face close to Matsuda's pale face and grinned crazily, "Upupupu, gotcha, just kidding!" She then released Matsuda's hand and once again observed her surroundings,

"Still, I'm sure there's a precious existence you want to protect. That's right, this is disturbingly similar to that thing with your mother, you must feel awful, sorry… Oh, speaking of your mother, I can't help but feel that Otonashi Ryouko-chan looks just like her… you know, they have the same kind of atmosphere and stuff. I wonder if they shared some sort of connection or similarity to each other. Or maybe you're the connection? I don't know if it's intentional or not, but it's nice that your friend is so forgetful, just like your mother. I gotta say, it seems like guys today are really into MILFs, you especially seem to like those MILFs who forget their own miserable backstory…"

As she turned to Matsuda, Enoshima looked up at him persistently. She happily bounced, walking around him over and over again.

"That's why, you wanted to protect her well this time. I get it, you feel sorry for her… even so, you're troubled. You're incredibly troubled. That's what it seems like after what I've been hearing…" Enoshima stood in front of Matsuda, she glared more intensely at him, "For real though, what do you plan to do from now on?"

Matsuda opened his mouth, trying to find words to say only to close it again. His pale lips trembled a little but he could only muster a glare directed back at Enoshima. Enoshima looked like she had been expecting his reaction and she began to walk quietly again.

"I suppose it can't be helped, oh dear. I'll just have to think about this one a little harder…" However immediately after she said that she stopped walking, "… D-Don't get me wrong or anything!" She yelled out as she went bright red with embarrasment, "I… I don't really… mind if you don't care about it… still, it's up to me, even though I'm unreliable… a-and I can't just leave it be!"

He didn't understand the reasons why.

Enoshima changed her personality with no context, Matsuda wasn't able to follow along with the conversation's direction at all. She paid no mind to his reaction at all and started to walk around again as if

nothing had happened.

“Well, I DID say I’d have to think about this for a bit, but really there’s only one way to go about things…” Enoshima circled around Matsuda as his eyes followed her and she continued in a very straightforward tone, “… It’s Kamukura Izuru. No matter what happens, he’ll end up with the blame. He ran away, and that’s fine since he’s the cause of the incident they call the Worst and Largest in Hope’s Peak Academy’s History. In that case it should be easy to fix the issue with the student council president, and the issue with the guys from the steering committee. Those guys are just trying to cover it up again anyway.”

Hearing her words, Matsuda muttered inside his head, “I knew it. Still, if that guy said what he thought was true, then that means… it just makes less and less sense.”

“Just tell me… what are you trying to achieve… ?” Matsuda asked.

“You know what!! I told you before, didn’t I? I’m not trying to do anything!” She screamed in a high pitched voice, and then laughed it off, “I’m just leaving this interesting tea party. I’ve had enough interrupting things. Right now, I’m just existing as a c-list character, I don’t do anything else!”

He didn’t know if her words were truly her honest feelings on the matter. No matter how many times she could repeat herself, he probably never would know - Matsuda understood that at least.

“Well, in the end it’s all up to you. I don’t really care what you do with this situation… Yeah, do whatever you like. Because I’ll accept whatever ending we come to,” Enoshima stopped walking. She stood in front of Matsuda and turned to the boy before posing another question, “So, what will you do? It is all dependent on whether you go along with it or not, isn’t it?”

Although Matsuda had understood what she was saying, Matsuda had to ask her something

“… You know where this Kamukura guy’s whereabouts are?”

“Nope, not a clue.” Enoshima quickly shook her head. Matsuda frowned.

“But you said Kamukura would get the blame and nothi-”

“Just relax about it! It’ll all be clear soon enough!” She interrupted

him in a high pitched voice, “I know where the guys who know where Kamukura is are and what they’re doing. Soon I’ll know where Kamukura is too!”

“The steering committee… ?”

“Ding dong, correct!” Enoshima announced with a cocky attitude, “If you heard it from those guys, then Kamukura’s whereabouts should be easy enough to work it out.”

“…but, even if they did that doesn’t mean I know where he is, right?”

Enoshima remained with a cocky attitude but her voice and deepened.

“… That’s right. It doesn’t mean that…” At that moment, the girl’s expression slipped and her face deadpanned, like she had lost interest in everything, “But, perhaps that is not such a big deal… I mean, if those guys don’t say then that just means Kamukura’s whereabouts remain unknown, your plan will fail and I’ll be ruined. But, that’s all that will happen, so you shouldn’t pay too much mind to it…”

As she muttered in a monotone voice, Enoshima turned to the window and walked towards it. Her eyes filled with melancholy as she leaned against the window and stared outside. The laboratory overlooked the east district’s courtyard - and the preparatory school’s parade.

“… You’re talking as if it doesn’t matter if I fail.” Matsuda raised his voice in a puzzled tone and looked towards Enoshima’s back.

“Because it doesn’t matter,” The girl continued to stare out the window and laughed absentmindedly, “In private, I would always think something along the lines of how despair-inducingly wonderful it must be to put an end to something as insignificant as small fish…”

She said things that she never meant to say, her words were a reflection of her true feelings that lay in her heart. Then that means-

“… You really are weird.”

“Ah, soz, soz! You don’t like that, do you?” Enoshima looked back and had an innocent smile on her face as if he was mistaken.

She had the face of a devil one moment and in the next she smiled like an angel. She hadn’t intended to make either face. That’s why he continued to shake as he talked with the girl. He felt more than exhausted.

“That’s right, for that girl’s sake it’s not like you can lose.” Her pure and innocent smile remaining on her face, Enoshima turned and walked silently to Matsuda, “Upupu. You really are someone who’s in true love. You’re prepared to fight for your love. I bet when they say ‘love is blind’ they were thinking of you… Ah, that doesn’t mean you do stupid things, actually I’m grateful. You’re destined to spend an eternity with that person, so I thank you from the very bottom of my heart.”

Enoshima walked up to Matsuda and didn’t come to a stop until finally their toes were touching. She whispered gently to him.

“Do your best, Matsuda-kun. Because that’s what I expect. Defeat the despair you face and let hope win, shining victorious… Because that’s what I expect will happen.”

As she whispered quietly, Enoshima leaned towards him until their faces almost touched. And she then leaned in more.

In the next moment, their lips touched.

Matsuda didn’t break away. He was puzzled but he gave up and just accepted it as it was.

It was vicious, long, entwining, violent kiss.

After a time that was far too long to be described in a single word, Enoshima finally pulled away. In the moments after the kiss she backed away from him and in dead silence she walked to the laboratory door.

“… Where are you going?” Matsuda asked as he wiped his mouth.

“Hm, in return for the kiss I thought I’d lend you a bit of a hand.” Said Enoshima laughing, but she quickly stopped.

Wait.

You don’t need to go out of your way.

But his mouth wouldn’t move. No, it wasn’t just his mouth, his entire body felt numb and was immobile.

“Upupu. Looks like you were caught by such a classic too, Matsuda-kun…”

Looking at the frozen Matsuda, Enoshima looked like she was a kid

who had just gotten a beloved toy. She was smiling, overcome by joy.

“You know, lipstick is a dangerous thing! My lipstick, for example, has been tainted with poison! Ahaha, poison! It just sounds like a classic, so nostalgic! Ah, but don’t worry. It’s not life threatening!”

Enoshima happily bounced around Matsuda’s still form. Knowing her plan worked, she proudly let her joy show. She finally let herself bounce in front of Matsuda.

“Now then, I should give you one final piece of advice!” Enoshima suddenly switched to a serious expression, like a boxer moments before the bell rings, “You know, in this scenario, only you can make the choice, Matsuda-kun. So think carefully, worry about it, and choose the choice you think it best. Hope or despair… the choices are so diverse and yet, surprisingly, intricately connected. Anyway, have a good think about it… um, think… Aah, it’s no good. I’m tired now. I wonder if this conversation is just that tedious… Well, whatever. In any case, that’s our conversation for now… goodbye.”

She bought the one-sided conversation she had started to a one-sided end. Enoshima staggered out of the lab.

WAIT!

Despite yelling it out, no sound escaped Matsuda’s mouth.

The boy stood, paralyzed. Waiting for feeling to return to his body.

CHAPTER 7

It was at that moment that I woke up, out of the blue.

As my consciousness returned to me, I couldn't help but feel completely refreshed and-

"Ahh, thank goodness!" I said, without realizing.

For a long time perhaps, I was having an awful nightmare. But that's over now. I was finally free of my long-lasting nightmare… or maybe not.

Somehow, it felt like this place also belonged in my nightmare. Because if that wasn't the case, then why else would I be in this room?

The walls, the ceiling, the floor, everything was covered with concrete. I couldn't see any doors or windows.

So, why would I be in such a strange room?

"Where… am I…?"

At least I was certain this place wasn't my room. No matter how forgetful I could get, I know I would never live in such an eerie room without a good reason for doing so.

"Don't tell me… I've been arrested, or something…"

Arrested, my words bounced off the cold, grey concrete. I thought I could hear a man coming to my room, stamping his feet with a thumping sound. It was really just the monster we've come to call 'loneliness'.

I can't find the exit!

It was that time I sat up quickly - I realized I had been sleeping on a bed. The bed had a pretty pink, princess-style canopy with an antique feel that little girls everywhere would have wanted, but oddly enough, it was standing alone in the middle of a bare concrete room.

The contrast between the delicate decorations of the bed and the bare minimum on the walls only added to the overall creepiness of the room. In addition, there were other parts of the room that were missing altogether. If this room was perfectly complete, then it would

have a furniture, and a door, but this room was absolutely missing those factors. As I quickly finished analyzing my surroundings quickly, the monster I spoke of earlier began to get to work. My fear and anxiety felt like it turned to pitch black tar, and it felt as though it wanted to steal my freedom of movement.

“Ooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooh…” A moan snuck past my shaking and trembling lips. The room’s outline and shape started to slowly distort. Tears began to appear in my eyes. But, it’s no use crying over this situation. It’s no use to cry. I held out for dear life and despite my intention to hold them back, the tears that had gathered in my eyes began spilling out, good morning, madam.

“Eh?”

Startled, I realised there was a female maid standing next to the wall.

“Good morning, madam!”

A voice came from it, it really is a girl. I could see the girl’s face behind her clothes. But only the face of her mask. Due to her mask I couldn’t determine her actual appearance.

The mask in question was an eerie bear mask which filled me with bad feelings.

The right half was a white, cute bear.

The left half was a black, evil bear.

The girl wearing maid clothing faced me and spoke to me in a happy tone.

“Good morning. Madam! I have prepared some tea for your morning routine!”

“Umm, uh… I don’t think I’m a madam…”

The girl didn’t appear to hear me as she simply walked over to me and shoved the silver tray she held onto me. On top of the tray was a teacup with a floral pattern on it. Steam rose from the teacup and disappeared into the air.

“T-Thank you…”

My throat was parched after waking up and was in desperate need of moisture. Forgetting my prior caution, I picked up the teacup and

drank the tea in it.

Too cold! Disgusting! It's so weak!

Incredibly, it was a three time loser. The tea was too cold.

Unable to hide my expression, I placed the teacup back on the tray.

"I shall be taking my leave now," The Bear Maid said as she turned on her heel and began to walk somewhere.

"Wait! Where are you going?" I quickly called out.

"Hm? What was that?" As The Bear Maid asked me, she knocked on the wall in front of me. Just like in a ninja temple, after she knocked once, the wall rotated around.

"… Eh, a hidden door…?"

"Ehe! At the time when we built this facility, we wanted it to adhere to Madam's sense of playfulness!"

"T-The playfulness is fine, but I'm leaving!" I raised my voice, feeling desperate.

"Hm?" The bear mask tilted to the side, "Just because… you want to leave doesn't mean you should leave."

"Huh?" This time it was my own face tilting to the side, "Even if I want to leave, I can't… What the hell, am I being confined here…"

"Confined!" A surprised voice echoed off the walls, "C-Confinement… that's… that's a bit of a leap in logic…" The Bear Maid's shoulders shook with laughter, "Just because I appear to be, doesn't mean I am laughing."

"Ah, I didn't…"

"On the contrary, I am filled with sadness beyond compare," Her shoulders shook more, "I am saddened because you are such an interesting person. I'm afraid I cannot make sense of your jokes. As it is currently, I don't think I'll ever fulfil my dream of having Monobear leaving everything to me. How sad…" The Bear Maid hunched over, looking heartbroken.

"I… I don't think I understand… but for the time being, just how do I get out of here? Can you show me?"

As I prompted the girl, she moved to the hidden door. I looked around the room to find my bag beside my bed.

"… Ah, sorry. Wait a second!"

I quickly got out of the bed and picked up my bag, I felt it's familiar weight. There was no mistaking it was mine.

"Now, time to get out of here!" I said, pushing the bear maid to the side as I left the room of concrete behind me.

What awaited me outside the room was a strange sight, indeed. It was a wide space that looked like a hall, but, just like the previous room, this room's ceiling, walls and floor were all covered in nothing but concrete. However, even though the room itself was wide, the ceiling was very low and it made me feel like I was cooped up. A fluorescent light hung from the ceiling, illuminating the concrete which only added to the bleakness of the room. Inside the room there I counted around 50 legs belonging to school desks, each evenly spaced throughout the room. At every desk there was a person sitting behind it. There were various men and women, all wearing the same school uniform. Furthermore, on their faces they all wore… again, bear masks.

The right half, a white, cute bear.

The left half, a black, evil bear.

"Hey… that bear sure seems popular, doesn't it… ?"

The maid next to me, wearing the same mask answered me.

"That is not a bear, that is Monobear."

Monobear?

I didn't really care about the name at all - All I could see was many men and women, all sitting at school desks, wearing the same school uniform with weird and creepy masks. There was nothing else I could focus on apart from the strange scene in front of me.

Even so I noticed that in front of the Monobear heads, still seated at their desks, were monitors. The Monobear heads all stared at the monitors, almost like they were preparing to eat them. From where I stood I could only see the back of the monitors, I had no idea what kind of video they were playing, all the same they appeared to be

focusing all their attention to them. They were motionless, staring patiently at the monitors, with all the vitality of a mannequin. I, on the other hand, felt like I had found myself in an empty graveyard.

"… What are these people?" When I asked timidly, the Monobear Maid answered with a serious tone.

"We are mutants. Everyone is oppressed, and so we barred ourselves away-"

"You had to?"

"We wanted to!"

"Instead of hope?"

"Please pay attention… mutants and such have excellent capabilities, for the most part we have not been oppressed. On the other hand, we believe it would be a waste to not hold back our abilities at least a little. Thus we would like to experience oppression in some form."

I couldn't understand what the girl was saying at all, for the time being I instead tried to change the topic.

"… By the way, I was wondering where this place is."

"I was waiting for that!" The monobear maid answered, in a proud tone, "This is our secret society, of course!"

"Huh? S-Secret society… ?"

Her words seemed too childish and her childishness seemed too unexpected, if anything I doubted her words. I thought perhaps it was some kind of metaphor. But no matter how much I thought about it, I couldn't think of any other meaning for her words. She must have been telling it as it was.

A secret society though! No one does that stuff anymore!

"A secret society for mutants… that's unreasonable!"

"Ehehe, surely you mean unreasonably cool! I should mention, us mutants all belong to the preparatory school. This is the preparatory school's secret society!"

"… The preparatory school?" Finally, something I could believe was true. I felt like she had left an important clue in her conversation, so I

took ‘Otonashi Ryouko’s Memory Notebook’ out of my bag and looked for any memories about the ‘preparatory school’.

I found it. I remembered.

The preparatory school isI don’t really know.

All I had written in my notebook was that it existed, and nothing else. It couldn’t be helped, I would have to ask about it straight up.

“… Um, have the people from the the preparatory school always known about this?”

“Not always. If we imposed, then our secret society wouldn’t be so secret anymore. A secret society must act as a secret society, and so must move as a secret society!”

“But, isn’t it still imposing to create a base here… you can’t keep it a secret, can you?”

“I must insist you refrain from saying such strange things!” The Monobear Maid suddenly sounded angry, “I have yet to hear anyone claim of our existence! Here in the basement beneath the west district we have quietly, and silently created our secret society, do you understand?”

“… Eh? The west district?”

“It is most suitable for the secret society. Due to the fact that the reserve students and staff are located in the west district, it means the regular staff do not visit anywhere near as much as they would otherwise. Furthermore, there is very little extracurricular activity here and clubs meet at the club rooms, and also this is the basement of a club room belonging to a now inactive mystery study group… that makes it more opportune!”

In the west district, beneath an abandoned club room belonging to an inactive mystery study group, there is a basement.

And that’s this place?

I looked around again. There was a slight feeling of being trapped within such a wide hall, even so there were several doors throughout the hall’s walls, there seemed to be another small room at the back of the hall. Across the hall, diagonal to me, I saw the entrance to another passageway. It looked to be a fairly long one at that. I couldn’t see the

end of it at all.

"… Can such a large basement really be underground here?"

"You don't believe me?" The Monobear Maid asked, suppressing her laugh, "It seems to be so much easier to not believe me… that's why it isn't despairing."

"Despair…" As I said that, I could feel something in the depths of my heart become uneasy. What a foul word. Instead I tried to shake off that word quickly and ask a question which had appeared in my head.

"A-Anyway, I understand that you're a secret society… and I understand that this is your secret base but… why are you a secret society to begin with… ?"

The Monobear Maid looked surprised, before answering me in a straightforward manner.

"The parade."

I muttered quietly as I flicked through my notebook, "Um, the parade is… a demonstration from the reserve students who felt dissatisfied with Hope Peak Academy's education system… right?"

"It is not a demonstration. It is a revolution." The girl corrected me with much force.

"… Eh?"

"Upupu. It's so exciting! It's a revolution to change Hope's Peak Academy and the world. My heart's racing just thinking about it!"

A revolution?

What did this person just say?

"And so, in order to complete our revolution, we must destroy Hope's Peak Academy's perfect little fantasy world. This school pushes for hope too much, all the while it torments and harrasses its surroundings. If this continues, this school's 'Super High School Level Hope' will never be crushed and-"

"Ah, wait a second!" I interrupted the Monobear Maid. There were a few words I missed for some reason, "What's… Super High School Level Hope?"

“Oh ho,” the Monobear Maid raised her voice in exclamation, “You are trying to test me with your words, aren’t you? That’s quite alright, I’ll answer your question in a flawless manner!”

I wonder why she’s taking so much time to talk about such an apparently important matter. I mean, if their society is so secret, then they shouldn’t have to bother keeping secrets, right?

But, with all this extra, unnecessary speech she used - she seemed very happy that someone was listening to her story.

“Ahem, Super High School Level Hope is the absolute talent which surpasses all other talent, a genius among geniuses. The pinnacle of human evolution, so to speak. Yes, that is Super High School Level Hope. Ta daaaaaa, that was my flawless explanation!”

“Ah, sorry… I stopped paying attention…”

“Eh? Seriously?” The Monobear Maid looked shocked, “O-oh… anyway…” The girl crossed her arms and after some groaning she continued, “I’m ready now!”

It seems like she’s ready now!

“The ‘hope’ we use in Super High School Level Hope’s meaning is a little different from the everyday use of the word, ‘hope’. What we call ‘hope’ refers to ‘a talent so great, it can be called the hope of humanity’. In other words, what we call ‘Super High School Level Hope’ is the owner of the most superior talent.”

“So then, you mean an incredible genius?”

“But talented in every way possible.”

“A perfect superhuman… but isn’t that cheating?”

“Well, I suppose it does sound unbelievable!” The Monobear Maid’s tone changed to a mildly offended one, “Like the setting out of a make-believe story. Hope’s Peak Academy’s mascot has been given so much goddamn VIP treatment that they’re on a platter outside of our reach… Ah, it’d be cheating by anyone’s standards!”

“… Aren’t you angry?”

“I have not yet decideeEED!” Despite her words, the Monobear Maid’s entire body seemed to be overcome by anger, “We’ll be going against

Hope's Peak Academy's research and nurturing of 'Super High School Level Hope', it seems to have a large budget. Even so, it's existence is hidden even to the student body! We do not know the details as to whether it is in fact a classified project but, it is entirely frustrating. I admit it, it's more frustrating than anything I have ever experienced! That research funding is being taken out of the preparatory school's precious budget. This school is literally stealing our money and our hope, and devoting it entirely to 'Super High School Level Hope'. They're using us as a launch pad for their stupid little make-believe story…Is that what this school calls hope? If it's for the sake of that ultimate talent, they don't care what we have to say about it? Is it not worth to even think about those with no talent? Well? WELL?!"

"C-Calm down a little-" … or not.

"Stop joking the hell around!! For god's sake just what is hope?!" The girl refused to even listen to me, "Aren't people chosen by talent so goddamn great? And the people who wait, aren't they great too? What bullshit! That's not fair, that's just elitist! It's fine if all us useless earthlings die just for the sake of those celestial few, isn't it? Right?! I'm right, aren't I? Oi!"

There was no longer any way for me to stop her onslaught of verbal abuse.

"Bullshit! That hope that they praise as being so mighty is covered in bullshit! Every little bit of hope in this school is covered in bullshit! Oh, incoming! The festival of shit is on it's way! Shit! SHIT! BULLSHIIIIIIT!!"

Her words overflowed with nothing but hatred. Her hatred was not half-baked either, it was a hatred like a deadly poison. She seemed to be referring to not just 'Super High School Level Hope', but also Hope's Peak Academy itself and furthermore, the very concept of 'Hope'… *etc.* I wrote all this in my notebook but soon my hand came to a stop.

Huh?

I returned my attention to the notebook.

Originally - Is what I would say, considering this notebook fundamentally acts as my memory.

Originally, I was suspended from school. It also mentions Super High School Level Hope, the parade, the preparatory school and Hope's

Peak Academy -

Huh, but this has nothing to do with me.

This has absolutely nothing to do with Otonashi Ryouko.

“This has… nothing to do with me…” I said so quietly I doubted it was audible to anyone. My words sounded so dry, it was like a desert, it had seeded itself deep inside me, “… W-What do I have to do?”

The Monobear Maid took a deep breath and looked shyly to me. She looked like she had finally calmed down.

“Hmm, nothing.”

That’s right, since this situation has nothing to do with me. So then, I should quickly escape from this place that also has nothing to do with me.

“… Hey, do you happen to know where to bathroom is? I need to excuse myself for a moment.”

“Eh? Is it a number one or a number two?”

“… Do I really need to announce myself before going?”

“No, but you see, we only have one bathroom, so if someone were to use it for a number two than it would have disastrous consequences for others who wish to make use of it. It’s Die Hard! It’s Die no Daibouken! It’s Die In Cries!!”

“Oh, okay! For now I’ll just go to the bathroom!” I said, and began to run like I was escaping. Well to put it more exactly, I was running, while actually planning to escape. More importantly, there was no real sense for me to be in this place because it had nothing to do with me!

“Ah, it’s at the end of the hall. Are you fine without a map?” The Monobear Maid called out as I ran away.

The end of the hall?

As I heard her, I could see the end of the hall growing closer and closer.

CHAPTER 7

I fled to the other side of the hall, between the monobear heads who were still at their desks. They didn't even bother to glance at me. Their eyes were still plastered to the monitors in front of them.

Just what is it they're so engrossed in?

I knew it had nothing to do with me, but curiosity had taken over my otherwise calm appearance - so I looked back.

"Huh… ?"

It was completely black. Every monitor was a pitch black, none had a single image projecting on it.

"It'll… start again soon… so…" the monobear heads sitting in front of me said in monotone. "Phase one has just ended… Phase two is now beginning…"

Interrupting the robotic words being spoken in unison, the monitors all lit up.

Hope's Peak Academy presents,

Young people, test the true extent of your 'hope' to win!

You've all proved yourselves to be more talented than anyone else!

For 'your own hope' you must kill more than anyone else has!

The final exam of mutual killing has now begun! (Phase two)

It used a lot of flashing words, taking up the full screen, even the local television stations refused to use it to such an extent nowadays.

What the heck?

Such a question appeared in my head for a moment, but it was truly only for a moment. The image on the screens changed, it changed toRed.

It was almost like each monitor had been completely covered in bright red cellophane. I looked closely and in the red I saw something wriggle. What seemed to be a person, I suppose.

In the room of red, the walls and floor were dyed crimson. I couldn't make out distinct features but a body covered in red rising from the ground, wriggling and writhing like a worm. The camera captured it all in birds eye view. At first I thought it was some sort of avant-garde dance or obscure video art but I soon realised that was not the case. Immediately afterwards, the stumbling person wandered to both sides of the screen. The clothing he wore was almost completely covered in blood. Even so, I could tell it was a uniform from Hope's Peak Academy. As the man dragged a foldable chair loosely behind him, someone was begging on his hands and feet before him, the man passed the foldable chair to his other hand and swung it up. When it was over the top of his head, he swung it down and, huh?

I couldn't grasp what had just happened, I just continued to stare at the monitor, dumbfounded.

The foldable chair was swung down an innumerable amount of times. He continued to swing it down on the groveling man without hesitation. The camera's angle changed and showed the face of the man swinging the chair close up. He seemed to be shouting something over and over again.

"Ah, turn up…. the sound…"

The Monobear Heads sitting in front of me turned up the volume on his monitor.

I could hear his yells emitted from the monitor. His voiced only grew louder and became heart wrenching screams.

"… I-I, DON'T, WANT, TO, DIE!!"

Apart from the anguished cries, I could hear another sound ringing out.

Squelch. Splat.

It sounded like yoghurt and cartilage being mashed together, every time the man swung down the chair, a sound would ring out.

"I-I'M!" Squish. "… NOT BAD!!" Splat. " IT'S NOT, MY FAULT!!" Slosh. "S-SO!" Squelsh. "I'M NOT, BAD!!" Sque-At that point the foldable chair broke.

But, the boy groveling in front of him was long past broken. His head was beyond recognition, instead looking like a squashed tomato

someone had dropped, around it was a mixture of blood and brain fluid. I was beyond the ability to adequately communicate my level of horror. In the monitor the skull was split open and the corpse was spilling out it's fluids. I couldn't look away from the body, I couldn't even move at all. I stared at the monitor, stunned, and totally dumbfounded.

"… T-T-That's, enough," the man in the monitor said to himself a he shook and trembled. "I-I've already killed those other two… that, s-should be, enou-"

The boy's words were interrupted by the sound of thick glass breaking. Before he could come to his senses, another man stood behind him with a bottle in his hand. Without warning, the newcomer beat the first man down with a single blow aimed at his head.

"AAH… AAaaaaaaAAAAaaAAaaAAaaaaAAAAAAAAAHHHH!" As the man clutched desperately at his face with both hands, he roared out like a wounded animal. Suddenly, with some abruptness, he ran from the room, thrashing in agony.

"W… wait, WAIT!!" The ambusher tailed after him with unsteady steps.

The image on the screen once again changed. Instead, it now showed a corridor. In the corridor was a running man whose face was drenched in blood. Small pieces of glass had embedded themselves into his eyes and caused them to bleed.

"S-S-SAAAAAAAAVVENMMMEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEHH!!!" He screamed out in a slurred voice. His mouth seemed to open and morph into the shape of a grin, but of course, that was not the case. His lips were torn open and he was not long able to close them. Standing in the front of him was a trembling girl.

The girl stood alone in the gloomy corridor, holding a cleaver tightly in her hands. Her creepy appearance filled even me with fear, however, the man running didn't even see her. As he screamed in pain, he ran towards her.

As the girl readied herself into a defensive position, she thrusted her cleaver up. At that moment, the boy swung down his head.

Squelch.

The cleaver sunk into his skull on impact, the shards of glass stuck in

his eyes were thrown out. The man continued to run forwards for a few steps before finally collapsing. As the girl's entire body shook and trembled violently, she patiently stared at the corpse.

"I-I d-d-don't… want t-to d-d-die…I ha-had to…" The volume on the monitor wavered with her trembling voice. Behind her, I could see the figure of another high school student with an iron pipe in his hand, sneaking towards her.

I finally managed to look away.

It was nothing but a movie made in bad taste - in ridiculously bad taste. This was some sort of video the reserve students had made, right? In that case, it really was scary. More than just scary-it was bursting with realism.

The 'dead' people were an image that could be associated with 'cold' which in turn could be associated easily with the illusion of 'death'. The warm blood seeping from the bodies of those dead is incomparable to the heat emitted from their bodies during the time of their life, it fogged up the lens on the camera with the humidity. It was like an immense heat that followed death.

But, just what on earth is going on, it's just so-

"Insignificant, isn't it… ?" Much to my surprise, one of the Monobear Heads sitting in front of me, still staring at a monitor asked me, "… This is hope? This thing is hope?"

The boy murmured, sounding honestly uninterested. He spoke, sounding completely immersed in despair.

"At some time in their life everyone will come to a point where they only think of themselves… and so, it's mutual killing… up until this point, people would say it's important to have hope… and so they'll do anything to protect it…people like us have abandoned that nasty habit… After all, it's just an insignificant little thing…"

He seemed irritated at his own words. His irritation only became more apparent as he spoke, suddenly he began to breathe heavily.

"… Um, how long have you been watching this? Always?"

"Not always. We've only seen it 5818 times…"

Did he say… 5818 times, huh?

I felt sweat run down my already soaked back. No matter how many times someone could say this video was fake, it continued to replay through my head. Despite only watching it once, my brain seemed inclined to believe it was real.

This really is something I shouldn't get myself involved in.

I have to escape right now!

I raised my line of sight up until I met someone else's eyes. On the other side of the hall, the Monobear Maid looked at me with patient eyes, she waved with her hand. I only felt more tempted to run away.

I felt chills rise up through my spine. As if trying to run from the video that tormented my mind, I dived into the passage at the back of the hall. The sound of my footsteps echoed through the dark corridor. Once again, the walls, floor and ceiling were all covered in concrete.

Concrete, concrete, concrete, concrete!

This passageway was covered in concrete too, it didn't seem wide enough for more than one adult to fit in. I felt an overwhelming sense of claustrophobia. The only light I saw was the dim, concealed lighting that illuminated my feet, the space was overcome by a strange atmosphere.

I ran down the passageway and suddenly I realised I had not idea why I was running down a passageway, anxiety took hold of me. I continued to run down this endless passageway for what felt like a lifetime for me. As I ran through the passageway all that appeared in my mind was how much I wanted to get out of it.

My feet suddenly stopped moving.

In front of me, another concrete wall stood in my way. It seems like I reached a dead end. To both my left and my right were bare, concrete walls. But, on the concrete wall in front of me, I saw a door leading to another small passageway.

Is this the exit?

Holding that belief in my heart, I reached out to the door with my hand. It didn't need a key or anything, the door opened easily. I peeked behind the it with high hopes.

I felt a bout of deja vu.

Just more concrete. It was a small room with its walls, floor and ceiling all covered in concrete. But, at the back of the room was a bizarre spectacle.

Two parallel sets of iron bars.

A jail cell?

I walked forward carefully and stood in front of the bar grate to my right first. On the other side of the bars, floated a dark black mist. A chilly, cool and ominous air drifted out from the darkness. I timidly tried to look at the other side of the grate.

"… Who's there?" A voice called out from inside the darkness, my heart jumped in shock.

"Eek!"

"Who's… there?" I heard the hoarse voice of an old man. He sounded like he was being overly cautious of something awful.

"T-T-There… W-w-w-where do you mean… ?" My shaking voice bounced off the walls.

From the back of the cell a shadowed silhouette appeared. They remained seated in a chair with their head hanging down as if they were asleep.

"U-Umm… are you okay?" Even so, the person showed no sign of hearing me. I tilted my head to the side.

"… It's no use anymore."

The voice did not come from the cell in front of me as I had expected, but instead, the cell next to it.

"He hasn't been responding since yesterday… don't you know it's useless?"

Useless?

What's useless?

I once again looked at the cell in front of me. My eyes finally adjusted to the darkness, the face looking downward, blanketed in darkness, slowly became more clear.

The face had lost its vitality. His surprisingly long, dark red tongue lolled out of his mouth sloppily. I knew at first glance. He wasn't sleeping. He was dead.

"EEEK!!" I screamed as I stepped back and subsequently ended up landing on the floor after misjudging my footing.

It seemed so real, the possibility of the corpse before me being fake hadn't come to mind at all. This situation had become more scary than anything I had ever experienced in my recollection. Shivers ran through my body so much I felt almost like it hurt.

"Is he… dead?"

He's dead - the cold air passed through my lips and I felt unable to breathe. I quickly tried to gulp down a lungful of air with a heavy sob.

It was at that point when I heard the old man's voice sounding surprised.

"Why is it you're so panicked? You're… a comrade of those people, right…?"

I flicked through 'Otonashi Ryouko's Memory Notebook' with trembling hands - I almost immediately recalled the memory of the reserve students.

"O-Of course not! Please don't lump me together with those people wearing the strange masks!"

"So… You're not wearing a mask?"

What a strange question.

"C-Can't you… tell just by looking… ?" I stood up, stumbling unsteadily like a newborn deer. I walked clumsily in front of the adjacent cell where I heard the man's voice. I could see the figure of a man hunched over on a chair.

"I can't see."

"… Eh?"

The old man raised his head. The area where his eyes should have been on his wrinkled face - I saw two dark indents instead. It wasn't covered by shadows. There was fine black stitching, like it had been done by a sewing machine, blood oozed from the stitches and dried

within the yarn. It had all come together into a pitch black mass preventing the man from opening his eyelids.

"… Erk!" I felt a severe bout of nausea as my stomach threatened to empty itself, I covered my mouth with my hands quickly.

"You seem surprised seeing this… you really aren't with them…" The old man's voice suddenly changed to a pleading tone, "… P-Please, can't you help me? Help me escape from this place! I couldn't thank you enough. S-So… I'm begging you!"

Because of the skin around the desperately begging man's eyes, it was almost impossible to discern his expression.

"W-what… happened?" I asked a simple question with a sob.

"T-They… locked us in separate cells… they wouldn't kill whoever they broke the jaw of… that's what they said…"

"They wouldn't kill… whoever they broke the jaw of…?"

"W-we cheered each other on at first… but the cheering was too much to bear… w-we were scared… if only we thought of betraying them earlier… there wasn't a choice… S-so…. so…" The old man's voice somehow went even lower. "So… they broke my jaw." He faced the other set of iron bars.

The dead body from the other cell wandered through the back of my mind. I wondered briefly why I had not forgotten about it yet.

"Hey, why don't we make a deal…?"

"Eh?"

The old man's voice sounded like he was begging once more, he suddenly started to talk again.

"If it's about what I know, then we should talk… you came here to hear about it, right? In exchange, you can help me escape from here… how does that sound?"

"… O-Okay." I answered somewhat automatically and instantly regretted doing so.

It really is better to be the one who isn't involved.

Even after saying I'd help him escape, I wasn't sure how to do it. More

and more regret began to pile up but even so -

The man with the ruined eyes' story had already begun a long time ago.

"The people from the preparatory school had tried to find out from me… about a person's location. They called him… Kamukura Izuru…"

For the time being, I decided it would be for the best to listen to the old man's story. Either way, it didn't seem like I had any real choice, I'd have time to think about it after the story.

"I do not know where they found out, but they knew for a fact that we were hiding Kamukura. If they found out where he is… they'd be a heartbeat away from true power."

True power - I felt my jaw tightly shut at such a cruel sound.

"They're goal is to… crush this school. Using the existence of Kamukura Izuru… they'll overthrow Hope's Peak Academy from it's very foundations."

"D-Did you say crush!" I suddenly cried out, "T-That's… too much…"

If Hope's Peak Academy is crushed, I won't be able to see Matsuda-kun anymore.

"So… you have to do something and find a way to stop the preparatory school…"

"B-But what can I do…?"

"If this keeps up, we'll be handing Kamukura to the preparatory school on a silver platter… and there's no mistaking it'll be the end of Hope's Peak Academy."

"E-Even if you say that…"

"The old school building… Kamukura Izuru's there."

"P-Please wait…" I ended the conversation prematurely with an interruption. Quickly, I wrote in 'Otonashi Ryouko's Memory Notebook'.

Old School Building.

But then…

Huh?

I suddenly felt an attack of dizziness, I struggled to stay upright.

What's happening?

"Until just a short time ago, we used have a large amount of guards there. Officially speaking, before the demolition we can no longer do that due to the danger… But that's not the real reason. In truth, it's because that's where we're hiding Kamukura Izuru."

As I listened to his story distractedly, it happened again. I felt a dizziness beyond anything I could adequately convey. My vision was becoming a blur, as I stumbled I laid my hand on the bars in front of me to steady myself.

"Up until now, everything I've said…"

I knew the old man speaking was right in front of me, and yet it felt like he was in the far distance.

"Is the whole story as far as I know… could you free me now?"

His voice sounded almost like it was being muffled. My heart pounded so hard I could hear it ring loudly in the back of my ears.

"Oy, what's the matter? Hurry up… The area around my eyes has been unbearably hot for a while now… I want to go to a doctor… Oy, did you hear me?"

I didn't.

The beating in my ears was only growing louder, it completely drowned out all other sound, I couldn't hear anything anymore.

I shouldn't be able to hear anything anymore, and yet I could hear a single, eerie laugh.

"… Upupu."

At the same time, I felt a presence behind me.

A disgusting presence, it was like having uncomfortably warm air being blown onto the back of my neck.

"… Upupupupu."

Sensing it, my body begun to shake and tremble. I couldn't say anything, like I was paralyzed. The laugh grew louder and higher - it was almost like it was mocking me.

"Upupupupupupupupupupupu."

"W-What's so funny… !" Even the older man's shouts sounded like they taunted me, the voice became more intense.

"Upupupu. Upupupu. Upupupu. Upupupu. Upupupu. Upupupu. Upupupu."

"W-Why are you laughing! What's so funny?!" The old man shouted, his voice filled with uneasiness. He sounded angry and especially hoarse as he failed to grasp what was happening, "S-Shut up! Shut up! Shut up! Shut up!"

The laughing came to a halt.

"… Upupu, what a lovely face you're making." The voice was directed to the old man, "But I said, 'You won't ever escape'… Your face will only become more despair-induced, you know?"

"… Wh… wha-w-wh-!"

"Upupupu!"

The old man's face was filled with emotion, for a moment it flashed white. His reaction seemed impossibly odd, the laughing grew louder again.

"Upupupupupupu. Upupupupupupu. Upupupupupupu. Upupupupupupu. Upupupupupupu. Upupupupupupu. Upupupupupupu. Upupupupupupu." The laugh bounced off the concrete around the room, each echo overlaying another.

Like a body with no soul, I stood still, dizzily swaying. The life was deprived from my entire body, making even small movements impossible. I couldn't even ignore the voices, only try to determine which was which. My consciousness reached it's limit, light, sound and colour had all disappeared at once. The scene before me twisted at skewed, like paint dripping onto water. The old man on the other side of the iron bars also became blurred at the border of my vision.

What?

As I watched the distorting world in front of me, I murmured to myself.

What is this?

Soon the world would melt into the puddle of colours, each colour hardened into different shades. The colours then started to intermingle once again, the world changed to another world. Like a scene with a flowing river, I swayed with the current, and everything in front of me passed me by.

Behind me was a giant, open door.

An avalanche of Monobear Heads poured out of it.

Screams echoed from the direction of the cell.

A puddle of bright red water appeared at my feet.

I ran from it in my trance.

Then, darkness.

The moment I opened my eyes, I found myself in a bright, white room.

It felt like I had reborn.

I, the new, reborn Ryouko Otonashi, woke up with a renewed sense of vigor as I stretched my body out, getting out of bed.

Turning my gaze to the window, the sun's light filled the white room with its brilliant light from between the curtains, signifying the morning's rays.

It appears that I fell asleep at some point. Being forgetful, I couldn't even remember the time I fell asleep-

"Ah."

At that moment, I felt light rush in from the back of my eyes. An image conceived itself within my head.

Underground facility.

Preparatory Department.

Monokuma.

A sudden flashback. Definitely an unfamiliar experience.

Could this be, my memory?

I immediately ran through my itching conscious.

It felt like I could remember something but at the same time I couldn't remember it. It came off like a natural sensation, yet at the same time I was embraced with bewilderment.

What is this? What happened to me?

Frightened with puzzlement and unsettlement, I shakily looked around the room. Doing so, I found my backpack sitting by my pillow. I hurriedly rummaged through it, and as I thought, there it was. The Ryouko Otonashi Notebook.

First things first, I need to remember where I am.

I paged through the notebook to see if I could recall anything about

the room.

Um, this is the Neurology Laboratory.

“Ha, thank goodness.”

Upon remembering that, I let out a sigh of relief.

Wait, but where’s Matsuda-kun?

Right away I looked around the room I once more, but I couldn’t catch sight of his appearance anywhere.

“Matsuda-kun…”

As I looked towards my notebook, I remembered something important.

Speaking of him, I haven’t received treatment from him for a while.

Now I know why my head’s been getting all funky lately. If that’s so, I need to get treatment from Matsuda-kun as soon as possible!

The moment I was enveloped by that impatience, something interrupted.

rustle rustle

I heard a strange sound.

It sounded like it was coming from under the bed I was sitting on. I ran through my itchy conscience once again. Someone’s voice repeated itself in my head.

Um, why are you under my bed?

Mental concentration for facing irritation.

Once I remembered that conversation, this time I energetically peeked under the bed.

“Matsuda-kun?”

Then, our eyes met.

I met eyes with the individual lurking under the bed.

But returning my gaze was an unfamiliar girl.

“Uh, who are you?”

Without thinking, I brought out that question. The girl, now on her back, shot back with a curt response.

“Do you think you could move from there? You’re in my way.”

“Uh…sure…”

Puzzled, I stepped away as the girl immediately crawled out from under the bed. She got up with a short grunt, and began brushing the dust off her body. Inadvertently my eyes stopped at her hands. The black leather gloves that neatly wrapped around her skin were quite impressive. But, possibly finding my stare uncomfortable, she quickly moved her hands behind her, as if to hide them.

“…Looks like the rumors were true.”

“Huh?”

Without any preface whatsoever, she suddenly began speaking to me.

“W-What do you mean by rumors…?”

“Memory impairment right? I heard you’re in treatment?”

Hearing that, once again my brain was assaulted by itchiness. Without thinking I sat down onto my bed. The girl appeared to give me a dubious look.

Trying to ignore the itchiness in my head, I asked her.

“A-Are you…someone I know?”

“Kyouko Kirigiri of Class 78.”

The response was a name I’ve never heard of. Right away I opened my notebook and searched for any kind of mention but, I couldn’t find anything.

So, she isn’t someone I know?

“The details of your memory impairment were kept low-key in order to prevent your own confusion, that was your intention wasn’t it? Or possibly Yasuke Matsuda’s intention as well.”

In face of her taking control of this interrogation, I was lost in

bewilderment.

“Huh? W-What are you talking about?”

“I see. So you don’t remember that either.”

“Wait, you know Matsuda-kun?”

Upon those words she became quiet. She diverted her eyes as well, only making her look more suspicious. Without thinking I approached her.

“Hey, you know him right? If you know him, then please tell me! Where’s Matsuda-kun?”

I desperately asked her. After all, he’s all that’s important to me. I want to know, and I have to know, as long as it’s Matsuda-kun.

“Unfortunately, I don’t know either.”

“…Eh?”

Matsuda-kun grew further away from my reach.

Failing to hide my disappointment, my face fell into dismay. The girl absentmindedly gazed towards the window while murmuring.

“I’m searching for Yasuke Matsuda as well. There’s something I need to confirm with him.”

“…Something you need to confirm with Matsuda-kun?”

The moment I responded, she returned her gaze towards me. She examined me as if looking for something.

“I might as well confirm something with you as well.”

“…Eh?”

“Earlier, you peeked under the bed while calling Yasuke Matsuda’s name, right? Was that because you knew that was something he’d normally do?

“Huh? W-What…?”

The sudden interrogation flustered me, and the girl continued to corner me.

“You’d be better off answering honestly. Lying will only make this conversation more difficult.”

“It’s not like I need to lie abo-”

“Then you can answer honestly right?”

I timidly gave in to her pushing words.

“Yeah, I knew. Matsuda-kun said that when he gets annoyed, he has a habit of undergoing mental concentration under a bed and falling asleep. But, what does that have to do with anything?”

“Hmm, mental concentration eh?”

An eerie smile crept up Kirigiri-san’s face. It seemed like she was making fun of Matsuda-kun, so without thinking I was about to-

“Well, it must have been a lie though.”

“…Huh?”

“Yasuke Matsuda must have had a precise goal in mind crawling under that bed, just like how I was earlier…”

While I was still talking to her, Kirigiri-san crouched down to the bed and slowly stepped towards me. She finally stopped right in front of me and spoke while looking downwards.

“Could you move?”

“Huh? Oh, okay.”

Confused, I got off the bed, and the girl put her hands under the dormant bedsheets and threw them up in one motion.

The bedsheets gently floated in the air.

“…You can see it right?

Kirigiri-san pointed under the bed.

I walked over to her side and squat down, peeking under the bed.

The one portion of the floor under the bed seemed to be sticking out unnaturally. There seemed to be a 50x50 space that lead into darkness.

“A hidden room, not just a simple one either. It’s about the size of a storehouse.”

“…Storehouse?”

“Probably to store a corpse.”

“…Huh?”

While I was completely taken aback, Kirigiri-san continued to speak in an indifferent manner.

“There is a corpse hidden under here. Actually, 2 corpses. They appear to be the 2 missing members of the committee board.”

“W-What are you saying?”

As blood rushed to my face, I unwittingly shouted out. Without looking towards me, she continued to speak with a cool face.

“It was a joke.”

“J-Joke…?”

“Corpses typically begin rotting within 5 degrees Celsius. If there was a corpse here, it would have already been thoroughly decayed. Hey, do you know what bodies actually go through when decaying? Sulfur-carrying proteins throughout your body begin decomposing, releasing hydrogen sulfide creating a decaying odor strong enough that it can’t be removed with just washing. And it doesn’t just smell bad. The decaying gas increases pressure throughout the body, changing the muscles completely…eyeballs would pop out from swelling like ping pong balls, the tongue and lips would enlarge, and even the ends of the arms and legs would bulge out. The skin would then turn black and become nearly unrecognizable from its living counterpart… There’s no way something like that would be around here. “

Just hearing that caused something sour to rise up, and instinctively I covered my mouth.

“I-I see, it was just a joke…”

“Although I was completely joking.”

As if to further pursue me, she once again returned that stern gaze towards me.

“In here is a jersey as black as the interior, along with a pair of shoes of the same color. Most likely there were planned to be washed, but there are still some traces of blood remaining. A flatcar easily capable of transporting a body is located here as well.”

“S-So…what are you trying to say?”

“What I’m saying is that Yasuke Matsuda was involved with the murder of the two missing committee board members.”

At that moment, a shiver strong enough to make my body jump assaulted me. My teeth shaking, I desperately shot back.

“W-What are you saying? T-There’s no way Matsuda-kun would murder someone!”

“No one said anything about him killing anyone. All I’m saying is he was involved with the murder.”

Her thin, colored pupils appeared to shine from the sunlight momentarily.

“Although, what about the murder of the student council president? I doubt he was just simply “involved” with that…”

“…Huh?”

“Last night, Super High School Level Student Council President Soushun Murasame’s corpse was found, which was believed to be suicide. But without a doubt, that was definitely a murder.”

I wasn’t able to see the end of this conversation, but even so, I instinctively had a bad feeling about it. The rate of the thumps in my chest raised to alarming heights. My breathing became ragged and sweat began pouring all over my body, and the blood vessels in my forehead began to violently pulse.

“Most likely…Yasuke, Matsuda, killed, Soushun, Murasame.”

I could hear the sounds of the pillars supporting my stability crashing as they fell. An inconceivable mass of uneasiness developed inside me. The strings of thought telling me to argue back jumbled together into a mess, stopping me from forming them into words.

Kirigiri-san continued to stare at me with those eyes, so calm and collected, almost to the point where it pissed me off. Those eyes had

no emotion, they were purely observing me.

Nothing makes sense anymore.

My messed up head, my tangled up thoughts, the overwhelming uneasiness, and those cold piercing eyes attacking me all at once as I sunk down a bottomless swamp.

While sinking, I desperately struggled and screamed out.

This has nothing to do with me!

I've had enough. I'll forget about this. If I just forget about it, everything will return to like it was before. This isn't an attempt to escape. Rather, it's a battle. A battle to fight off anyone that isn't Matsuda-kun out of my world.

Nothing to do with me. Nothing to do with me. Nothing to do with me. Nothing to do with me.

Before long, in harmony with the explosive beating in my chest, my voice became a scream.

Nothing to do with me! Nothing to do with me! Nothing to do with me! Nothing to do with me! Nothing to do with me! Nothing to do with me!

As I continued to frantically shout out, the boiling heat from the bottom of my stomach bubbled up like magma.

"THIS HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH MEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!"

And it really exploded.

At the same time as my exclamation, the door behind Kirigiri-san shattered.

Small shards of glass and wood fluttered through the air, and the door as if made out of paper fell to the floor. The sound of destruction then finally reverberated around the laboratory like a storm.

I couldn't believe it. But I did that! Me!

While looking at the spectacle past Kirigiri-san's turned head,

T-This is my…true power?

I, Ryouko Otonashi, felt this fearsome ability awaken inside me.

When Kyouko Kirigiri stepped into the Neurology Laboratory, that girl was already lying down on the bed. She heard rumors about that girl. Supposedly she suffered from memory impairment and had been undergoing treatment in this laboratory, seems they were true.

But enough of that. More importantly, Matsuda-san didn't seem to be here.

Well, not like I was expecting him to be.

Having already anticipated that, she changed gears and began investigating the room. Due to Matsuda's absence, she was free to do as she pleased.

With that, she faced the girl lying on the bed.

I should probably be careful not to wake her up.

She wanted to avoid any unnecessary annoyances.

She then began to cautiously examine around the room.

After getting a good look around the room, she then proceeded to walk next to the bed.

As I thought, something's suspicious.

That impression was not aimed towards the girl lying on the bed, rather, it was towards the bed itself. If she was curious, the natural thing to do would be to investigate the bed. As if it a matter of fact, she began searching around the bed. Then, looking at the floor hidden under the bedsheets, she found a storehouse.

Kyouko, detecting the black jersey and shoes along with the simple pushcar casually tossed in there, soon developed a conclusion.

Yasuke Matsuda was involved with the murders of the committee board members. The only ones who recognized this were Kyouko and her client, the president of the school grounds. Furthermore, with even the corpses disappearing and hardly any decisive evidence for this case, she had all the more reason to continue to repeat her straight-forward investigation.

And she found a clue in an unexpected location for that very case. She didn't think Yasuke Matsuda would have been involved in this, but if that was the case, he might know where the remaining two committee

board members have gone off to.

Ignoring Kyouko's warnings, the 4 committee board members who hid their whereabouts have now all become missing. But, it seems that finally those whereabouts can be revealed.

Whether or not it would be too late or not was a different story, but that wasn't important. Whether or not they help her or become sacrifices didn't matter. Her role was to expose the hidden truth as a detective, and those were her true feelings

But, who would have thought that those two cases were connected.

The reason she came here wasnt even related to the committee board in the first place.

She was here to investigate the case on the corpse of Soushun Murasame found in the Teaching Staff Facility.

According to the school doctor, it seems that the last person to meet with Murasame was Yasuke Matsuda. And not only that, after that meeting him he somehow disappeared to somewhere, hiding his whereabouts. As Kyouko thought, if Murasame's death was due to murder, then Yasuke Matsuda was definitely suspicious. If that's the case, then why did he murder Soushun Murasame? In order to find that motive, Kyouko came to his main headquarters, this laboratory.

But, seeing that Yasuke Matsuda wasn't just involved with Murasame's case, but the committee board's as well, saying that he was the center of these 2 cases wouldn't be too far off the mark. To be involved with two cases at the same time like this, there was no way it couldn't be a coincidence.

If that's so, then what is his goal?

What does he know?

What is he hiding?

While she was going through her thoughts under the bed, unexpectedly a sound could be heard from above the bed.

It looked like the girl had woke up.

If so, it might be a good idea to ask her a few things. Chances are, it would be pretty unlikely for someone undergoing Yasuke Matsuda's

medical treatment to just be a bystander. It might end up forcing her to realize the painful reality, but for the sake of revealing the hidden truth, there was no other choice. Again, those were her true feelings.

There wasn't much time left either, Kyouko was struck with impatience close to frustration. If she didn't hurry, it may become too late to find the clues she needed.

Yasuke Matsuda may never come back.

That was her intuition, but it wasn't just simply intuition. It was the intuition of the Kirigiri family's detectives. That intuition drew her forward. It drove her to find Matsuda's whereabouts as soon as possible. It wasn't like she was worried for his sake. It was only that she had to fulfill her duty as a detective to complete her accepted request. It was to ascertain the whereabouts of Izuru Kamukura.

Why? Because she was a detective.

So then, in order to fulfill her duty as a detective, she began her interrogation towards the girl.

"I might as well confirm something with you as well."

With that starting statement, she then proceeded to question the girl on sensitive matters in order to corner her.

Then, as she observed her response, she developed a conclusion.

This girl doesn't know anything.

The girl was falling into mass confusion, and her state showed that it wasn't an act. And from what I could see of her forgetfulness, there was no sign that she could have been an accomplice.

In other words, any further conversation with her wouldn't reveal any more results.

Rather than becoming discouraged, Kyouko thought of what would be the best course of action. But, before handling that, there was something else to deal with.

"THIS HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH
MEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!"

The sudden shriek that seemed to pierce her eardrums.

Then at the same time, the sound of something breaking roared behind her.

Instinctively turning around, the door's glass fragments scattered through the air.

Then, in the center of all that, a man's appearance revealed itself.

That man looked towards Kyouko and a hideous sinister smile crept up to his face, resembling a death god looking to cast an ill omen

While watching my screams shatter the door of the laboratory, I was awakened to my surprising ability.

The tale of the little girl being cornered, suddenly awakening to her power and seeking revenge. I felt like I saw something like that in a movie. But never mind that, more importantly I have to do something to stop my power from going berserk!

I understand. There is only method to stop this rampage.

And that's Matsuda-kun!

Other than Matsuda-kun examining my messed up head, there is no other secret technique to stop this overflow of power. Anyway, I have to hurry! If I don't do something about this soon, something horrible will happen!

That's why in order to meet Matsuda-kun,

I'm going to have to use this uncontrollable power just one more time!

Determined, I turned my gaze towards the wreckage and glared at the back of Kirigiri-san's head. I then focused all my concentration towards her head and locked on, letting out all of my power with a scream.

"BUUUUUURRRRRRST!!"

Doing so, the girl's head didn't burst into pieces like a watermelon at all.

Huh?

As I looked at Kirigiri-san's perfectly unchanged normal head, I tilted my head as I noticed someone's shadow standing in the back.

"So, you really were over here…"

It was a low, threatening voice.

The man with the jet-black uniform noisily stepped onto the wreckage of the overturned door while his just as jet-black hair swayed back and forth. His slim frame gave off a feeling of toughness, like a well-strung wire, and he was quite tall as well.

"…Too good for knocking?"

Kirigiri-san warily chose her words, attracting his attention.

“…Mind your own business.”

While snapping back with his sharp words, he shifted his gaze alternatingly between Kirigiri-san and I with his thin reptile-like eyes.

The moment I saw his eyes, that itchiness began to spring back into my head again.

Right away I dropped my gaze to Ryouko Otonashi’s Notebook, and then I remembered.

That’s right, the pitch-black man’s name was, Isshiki Madarai.

“Wait…but, why?”

After all, he’s gotten beaten up so many times right in front of me.

First, when he got crushed under a bookcase.

Second, when he was assaulted by the black shadow known as Super High School Level Despair.

Third, when he was confronted by Mukuro Ikusaba right in this Neurology Laboratory.

Even with all of that, just why?

“Are you surprised why I’m unwounded?”

Successfully reading my thoughts, Madarai stretched out his arms to an unsettling length and smiled. The smile resembled a crescent moon, making it almost like a mask.

“I’ve said it before haven’t I? I’m immortal.”

As if complying with his words, the glass at his feet chimed.

I just wanted to see Matsuda-kun, but all I get are these people speaking nonsense surrounding me.

“Trying to get anything out of that girl is futile…”

“…Who’re you?”

Madarai faced Kirigiri-san with a cold stare that would have frozen a

normal person. But Kirigiri-san looked right back at him and shook it off like it was nothing, and continued speaking indifferently.

“You were originally investigating the disappearance of the student council, correct?”

Madarai raised his eyebrows, surprised.

“…You know who I am?”

“I just overheard a few things.”

Kirigiri-san raised her chin, and after a few moments continued to speak.

“But I know that you are not immortal at least. After all, your ability isn’t all-powerful, it definitely has its limits. Isn’t that right, Hope’s Peak Academy Student Council Member Super High School Level Bodyguard-san?”

“That’s something only the student council would know…where the hell did you overhear something like that?”

grind grind

There was a peculiar sound coming from the back of Madarai’s mouth.

“If your ears are that good, then you should probably know something about this then. C’mon, tell me. Who’s the guy behind Hope’s Peak Academy’s History’s Largest Worst Incident? Where’s the bastard that killed the student council?”

“Haven’t you been listening? Asking is pointless. Of course, along with that girl over there, I don’t know anything about that.”

“No, that’s a lie.”

“What makes you think that?

“My intuition. Do I need a reason other than that?”

After saying that, Madarai’s intimidating presence grew stronger.

The glass under his feet continued to shatter from his force as he stepped forward, and naturally, I began to step back.

“Hey.”

While being cautious of Madarai, Kirigiri-san faced me and spoke.

“Judging from the way he’s been talking, you’ve driven him off multiple times haven’t you?”

“Y-You shouldn’t expect too much from me.”

I weakly turned my head towards her.

“I don’t really remember, but every incident was just a coincidence, and it looks like he’s immortal too…”

While speaking, I carefully glanced towards Madarai, and in return he glared at me with his sharp eyes. Panicking, I quickly averted my gaze while, “I-It’s impossible! At least we can take advantage of our numbers, like one of us becoming the decoy and the other running away…that’s the only way!”

I attempted to casually suggest her to become a decoy, I wasn’t sure if she successfully took in my meaning.

“So, what are you gonna do? Behave and fess up, or should I beat you ‘til you talk? Do you think you could hurry up and make your mind?”

Madarai flipped his greasy, long hair while asking.

“L-Like I said, I really don’t know anything…”

“We don’t know anything.”

In contrast to my stuttering words, Kirigiri-san confidently shot back. She had almost nothing to do with the situation, but her resolve didn’t once seem to waver. Honestly, it was almost like she was being stubborn for the sake of being stubborn. Well, she must have had her reasons, but I would like it if I didn’t have to get dragged into this.

“…Seems like you won’t budge.”

As his voice grew more threatening as he mumbled, he grew a silent smile.

“Looks like I have no choice then. I’ll use my true power. I’ll tell you right now, this is unlike anything you’ve seen so far. It’s a pain but I’ll deal with you in one go.”

He then started to sway his slender body left and right.

Right at the next moment, a mysterious sensation invaded my body.

As if I was dizzy, my vision became to blur. Madarai's appearance in front of me seemed to split into two.

But, the only thing splitting into two was Madarai, the rest of the world remaining like always.

"…W-What?"

No matter how many times I blinked, the scene in front of me didn't change.

My eyes weren't fooling me, there really were two Madarais in front of me.

"I'll introduce myself once more."

"I"ll introduce myself once more."

In harmony, they both spoke at the same time.

"My name is Yoshiki Madarai."

"My name is Goshiki Madarai."

[Okay this is kind of like a play on words, with Isshiki Madarai's name. the 一(i) in 一式斑井(Isshiki Madarai)'s name uses the character for the number 1, while Yoshiki and Goshiki use the characters for 4 and 5, 四(Yo) and 五(Go), respectively. By the way, Yoshiki's name might be Yonshiki due to certain japanese language tendencies, but I'm not too sure.]

The slim, long bodies of the left Madarai and the right Madarai seemed to entangle around each other.

The scene was creepy enough to send shivers up my spine.

"You really look just like one…what I heard was true it seems."

Kirigiri-san's cautious words sounded out once again.

"Like I said, just where the hell did you hear about those things."

"Like I said, just where the hell did you hear about those things."(Yo) (Go)

Madarai's creepy voices once again came out in harmony.

"The Madarai brothers…the octuplets from Isshiki Madarai to Yasshiki Madarai (Ya in this case being the character for 8), those who know about them refer to them as Super High School Level Multiple Birth Siblings…due to efficiently utilizing their mutual understanding, their teamwork has led them be known as the Super High School Level Bodyguard, the Madarai Brothers' greatest talent…at least that's what I heard."

"O-Octuplets?"

Octuplets including Isshiki Madarai to Yasshiki Madarai.

Super High School Level Multiple Birth Siblings.

That is the Madarai Brother's greatest talent.

"T-That's cheating, isn't it?"

I desperately shouted out.

"That's not being immortal at all! It doesn't even make any sense!"

Then, the 2 Madarai's mouths creaked open.

"Well, that's just how it is."

"Well, that's just how it is."

"Well, that's just how it is."

Wait, was there one extra?

And at that moment I heard footsteps from behind me.

Both Kirigiri-san and I turned around at the same time, and as if blocking the doorway to the back of the laboratory, stood another Madarai.

"…I'm Rokushiki Madarai." [This time it's the character for 6. Like earlier, I don't know if it's really pronounced Roku.]

That was the arrival of the 3rd one.

"With this, you guys have lost by numbers as well." and in order, "That's why you shouldn't let your guard down." following up right on

beat, “We’re going to beat reality into you ‘til you fess up.” as all 3 voices rang out.

Right to left, and then from behind.

They circled around me forming a semicircle, perplexing me.

“H-Hey…what should we do?”

I faced Kirigiri-san with my clingy voice.

“This isn’t the time to be”

“thinking about that!”

“thinking about that!”

The two Madarais in front of us kicked at the wreckage towards us, turning the wreckage into lethal projectiles.

“…Tsk!”

Kirigiri-san rammed into me, using that force to push me to the opposite side. The flying bits of the door’s wreckage barely missed us at at a hair’s breadth.

“…There!”

Due to being pushed I fell on my butt, but because it was no time to falter I quickly stood up. But right at that moment the neck cuff of my shirt was pulled from behind.

“Gah!”

Without time to even think about it hurting or to be let go, I was thrown. Like a rampaging child throwing his doll in a tantru, my body flew through the air with my head and body hitting a wall, finally coming to a stop.

“…Kh!”

My eyes blacked out from the shockwave.

All I knew was that I was in the hallway. It was difficult to comprehend how easily I was thrown from the laboratory, but in any case, I just had to deal with my body aching all over. With my butt, my neck, and my back all being beat up more than necessary, I tried

to pull through my numbness along with dealing with the pain coming from seemingly losing all feeling from those body parts.

Then out of nowhere, Madarai stood in front of me.

Not too far from the ceiling, his eyes looked down on me from a sharp angle, which more than resembled a reptile now. In other words, it was terrifying.

“You’ve gotten away time after time again.”

Even though I heard his words, strangely his mouth didn’t move.

“But with two people, this should be more than enough.”

Then from behind the Madarai standing in front of me, stepped out a different Madarai.

Looks like it was that Madarai who was talking.

The 2 Madarais standing in my blurred vision, this was truly a scene of despair. Not only that, with me thrown into the hallway, I couldn’t rely on Kirigiri-san any longer.

“I’ll ask you one more time.”

“I’ll ask you one more time.”

They once again spoke out in harmony.

“In what way are you related to this case?” following up, “Who should I be taking out my revenge on?” in rapid succession, “Where is that bastard?” as if winding together, “Or maybe it’s really you?” they, “Hurry up and talk.” pursued me.

But, right at that moment.

I suddenly felt a breeze over my head.

Looking up, I saw that the window was open.

Ah.

The moment I saw that, an inspiration flew into my mind.

“Looks like you won’t talk unless I force it out of you.”

“Looks like you won’t talk unless I force it out of you.”

At the same time, the Madarais’ hands reached out towards me.

There was no time to hesitate.

I dodged through the arms as I stood up, and at that rate I jumped with all my might onto the edge of the window. With that motion, I aimed towards the rear garden, and that’s when I realized.

This was the third floor.

“Wha-?”

“Wha-?”

The expressions of the Madarais left behind both changed to surprise simultaneously. Throwing myself out of the hallways’ third floor window was definitely outside of their expectations, and that goes the same for myself. Actually, the surprise on my face was most likely even greater than theirs. Then, while still surprised, my body caught by gravity continued to fall straight down towards the garden.

“Aaaaaaahhh…..”

What followed that fall was, a shock wave.

It wasn’t a fatal shock wave however. It didn’t even take my conscious. Miraculously, my body fell straight into some shrubbery, exceptionally cushioning my fall.

That was just 100% coincidence.

I didn’t know about it, I didn’t aim for it, and I didn’t expect it either.

But for some reason, even though I couldn’t understand it, I took that coincidence like it was a matter of course. Still, the shockwave was strong enough to numb most of my body, and my arms, legs, and face were all being stabbed by the prickly bits of the shrubbery. Even so, I calmly ordered my head to escape, and my arms and feet slowly regained their functions. I then proceeded to crawl out on all fours.

While crawling, I ran into 2 pairs of black shoes.

Continuing on all fours, I raised my head up to see two Madarais looking down on me.

“I’m Shichishiki Madarai.” [7]

“I’m Yasshiki Madarai.” [8]

They were different Madarais from the ones on the third floor. Looks like they were called out.

“Well, we certainly didn’t expect you to come falling down.”

“Well, we certainly didn’t expect you to come falling down.”

Without thinking, a gulping sound came from my throat.

But despite this nightmare-like situation, I didn’t feel confused, scared, or uneasy. Instead, what I felt was, That intense itchiness in my brain.

And along with that itchiness came a premonition.

I won’t die.

I won’t die here.

How that premonition floated up was unknown even to myself, but it was definite that that was the premonition. I was almost completely sure about that.

“What’s with that easy-going face.”

“It’s pissing me off.”

The two Madarais looked like they were wrapping around each other as they advanced and examined my face. In those eyes were a thick concentration of murderous intent.

“Why don’t you understand the situation you’re in for once?”

“Why don’t you understand the situation you’re in for once?”

The Madarais then formed a fist together, and followed up raising them together.

But my gaze was looking past them, focused on the girl behind their shoulders.

It seems that, my premonition earlier conveniently matched the situation at the moment.

“You shouldn’t pry into outsiders’ affairs so much.”

The Madarais turned around at the same time, and the girl who was supposed to be as far away to the point where she was the size of a thumb suddenly appeared behind their backs.

The itchiness in my brain. At that point, I remembered.

That girl’s name was, Mukuro Ikusaba.

“I won’t say anything but, you should probably lay off that girl.”

Then with both hands, she firmly gripped the Madarais’ arms.

“…Guh!”

“…Guh!”

As their expressions changed to anguish, their knees hit the floor.

“Give up, your hands won’t last in this level of situation…”

Her grip on their hands were so strong that a sound could be heard. Just where could that slim girl be hiding all that power? But the ones that understood her strength first hand were the suffering Madarais themselves.

“Don’t screw with me!”

“Don’t screw with me!”

The kneeling Madarais screamed, almost at the same time.

Behind Ikusaba-san, who was behind the Madarais, came 2 different Madarais jumping out.

Several right and left legs shot out in symmetry in a flying kick towards Ikusaba-san. But without any signs of being fazed at all, she released the arms of the Madarais in front of her and dodged the flying kicks coming at her in one fluid motion. The two brothers who launched those flying kicks nimbly changed positions before landing.

The four Madarais had Ikusaba-san completely surrounded.

“What do we do about that girl over there?” “Leave that to Rokushiki.” “Can you handle that by yourself?” “It’s not like she’s accustomed to combat.” “First let’s take care of this one.” “Yeah, that

would be simpler.” While they discussed their strategy with their ridiculously similar voices, their firm watch over Ikusaba-san did not waver once.

But, Ikusaba-san showed no signs of being cornered. Instead, she was rapidly glancing at all their faces while seemingly murmuring her confirmations.

“If I defeat these four, and I just leave one for Kirigiri-san…got it, all according to plan.”

All according to plan, hearing those words, the Madarais strongly reacted. In harmony, all four of their voices shouted out.

“What the hell are you talking about!”

But of course, Ikusaba-san responded with a cool face.

“Not much, nothing you guys would need to know…you guys don’t even seem to be holding any important information in the first place. That’s why I’m telling you now, you should probably give up.”

“Shut up!” “Shut up!” “Shut up!” “Shut up!”

The four intimidating voices attacked Ikusaba-san all at once.

“You think we can give up now?” “We swore to them!” “We’ll keep on going for the student council!” “We’ll prove that to you!” “We swear to protect the student council’s honor!” “We’ll protect it to the death!” “We’ll definitely take our revenge on you!” “We won’t let anyone get in our way!”

From the right to the left,

From the front to the back,

Their frustrated interchanging words dispersed throughout the air. Even so, Ikusaba-san carefreely scratched her head, sighing.

“Um, I feel like I can relate to what you guys are going through but… wait, that’s a lie. I actually can’t relate to them at all…but I can understand them. But that girl is different. To her, she has no gain from understanding what you have to say. Stuff like your thoughts or your hope, they mean nothing to her. It means nothing to the one who set up this entire scenario, so trying to end all of this by pushing on her would be futile.”

grind, grind, grind, grind

The sounds of their mutual grinding filled the garden.

“It looks like you don’t know anything at all.” “You know about Hope’s Peak Academy’s History’s Worst Incident it seems.” “That’s convenient.” “We’ll listen to you to what you have to say.” “But after we beat you up.”

The four Madarais bent down and formed a stance.

“Ah geez, even after I warned you.” Ikusaba-san seemed to grumble. “Even though I didn’t want any more victims to get involved.”

“Victim?” “Victim?” “Victim?” “Victim?”

Once again the Madarais all shouted together. Encircling her like a dog threatens to shepherd a herd, bared their teeth and roared.

“Do you know?” “Do you know about our brothers?” “Where did are brothers disappear to?” “What happened to Isshiki, Nishiki, and Mishiki?” [1, 2, and 3]

Then Ikusaba-san turned back and with her freezing glare she responded.

“Don’t come near me…”

Those words triggered it.

A sound like something rupturing was heard as the four brothers kicked off the ground with all their might, as they headed towards Ikusaba-san from 4 directions all at once.

“Like I said…it’s pointless…”

Just as Ikusaba-san was about to get hit by the blunt of those attacks, she dodged them completely with just one movement.

“No matter how many of you come at me at once, your base value never changes. That kind of pack mentality attack won’t get through me.”

While murmuring in that calm voice, she moved at a speed incomprehensible to the naked eye. The Madarais attacked with such coordination to the point where their breaths were at the same pace, while Ikusaba-san easily dodged them with brilliant deduction.

It was almost like she was from a different dimension.

“I won’t let anyone oppose that girl…”

Even while dancing she murmured. Her breath didn’t falter once.

“That’s because this is for…despair…”

The Madarais continued to repeat their emaciated attacks while, Ikusaba-san on the other hand continued to move faster, rolling like a torrent. Eventually, that torrent mercilessly swallowed them up.

From there, it was pretty much a one-sided development.

It developed one-sidedly, and it ended one-sidedly.

When Ikusaba-san finally stopped, the four Madarais were laid around her feet.

That wasn’t some halfway transition. What I witnessed was truly only that event.

“It’s over…”

Letting out a small sigh, Ikusaba-san murmured while already looking away from the Madarais. Those eyes then faced towards me.

Astonished, I forget what I was doing and was just taken aback.

“Why are you…so strong…?”

“It’s all I’m good for after all.”

That girl who replied didn’t have one thing you could call an expression laid out on her face. It was like she was wearing an emotionless mask, with only specks of blood splattered here and there.

“…Why did you save me?”

“Well, just because.”

“Just because?”

Ikusaba-san nodded and dropped her gaze down to her feet. After a few moments of silence, she gently opened her mouth again.

“For example, it’s like a video game RPG…”

Video game?

It’s like that?

“Like a straightforward RPG or something…the people who live in that world, it looks like they have their own will, but it just looks like that…in the end they are just scripted to act in a way convenient for the game…it’s the same with the protagonist, it’s just that the protagonist doesn’t even realize what he is…”

“What are you…trying to say?”

“Um, well, my fight with the Madarais wasn’t a coincidence…actually it’s the same with the Madarais coming to the Neurology Laboratory…and the same with removing the unnecessary Kirigiri-san from the scenario…everything was determined right from the beginning.”

“W-What do you mean by determined?”

“The same goes for me. I’m just moving along as scripted with her scenario…moving accordingly to her will, only to prevent the scenario from taking the wrong path…”

“Her?”

“I’m talking about Junko Enoshima of course.”

At that moment it felt like my blood froze.

As expected, everything returns to Junko Enoshima. Everything from getting me or Matsuda-kun or involved, it’s all because of that horrible girl, wait what?”

At that point I suddenly realized it.

“Then, you’re working with Junko Enoshima?”

As I glared at her blamingly, Ikusaba-san hesitantly responded, as if embarrassed.

“Well, working with her, it’s more like she’s…my…sister…”

“Huh?”

It was too sudden of a confession.

Mukuro Ikusaba and Junko Enoshima are sisters… Wait that's even worse than just working together isn't it?

"But, even though we're sisters and we're connected by blood…all of that doesn't mean anything to her. After all, all that girl looks for is despair, other people's despair, her own despair, that's all that exists for her…"

All of a sudden it looked like Ikusaba-san's eyes were gazing far away.

"That's why, whoever it may be, whatever situation it may be, whatever world it may be, it just all means nothing to her, unless she is dealing with despair. That's the world of the girl known as Super High School Level Despair, Junko Enoshima."

"W-What the…but that's ridiculous!"

"Yes, it's ridiculous. That's what Junko Enoshima is."

Hearing her response, I felt a new sensation of dread. This time it was creeping up from my feet bit by bit.

"Yes, she really is ridiculous…to the point of despair, she's the lowest, worst sister ever but…that's why I can't leave her alone. That's why I have to help her. After all, I'm the only one who can understand her."

Then, looking at the face Ikusaba-san showed me, I was suddenly taken aback. The ever so emotionless face was, ecstatic and smiling.

"I don't know if…she is attracting despair or despair is attracting her but…she has lived her whole life with despair by her side. She lived while immersed in despair. That's why she began looking for despair in others. She learned to enjoy pushing people into despair. But you know, that's normal. It's the same as someone being cursed by misfortune fall into hatred for those who aren't. But what's special about her was that, she learned to enjoy inflicting despair onto herself. That's how the link to despair began. As she chased down despair, she pushed it onto others on the way. Doing so, it caused her to desire falling into despair even more…and because of that chain to despair, the Super High School Level Despair was born."

While she spoke, it was like she fell into a fever, the expressions on her face turned into ecstasy. It was so completely absurd that it would have been hard for anybody to think of it as anything but a joke, but I understood that this was real. It might've been because the memories of Junko Enoshima inside me led to that conclusion.

“Hey, you don’t get it right? I don’t think anybody could. But you know, only I can understand it…”

Consumed by ecstasy, even Ikusaba-san’s breaths began to become ragged.

“Only I am able of understanding her. That’s why she needs me. She still hasn’t realized that but, maybe she is only pretending not to realize. Ufu, that’s because she’s so shy. Ufufufu.”

Seeing this intoxicated Ikusaba-san continue to talk like that, repelled me.I knew that she definitely didn’t have normal feelings for Junko Enoshima, but that sort of thing shouldn’t have anything to do with me.

“…That’s right, it has nothing to do with me.”

Without thinking, I started speaking.

“Eh….?”

“It’s not like I know anything about you or Junko Enoshima…that sort of thing doesn’t have anything to do with me…”

Realizing what I was saying, I quickly apologized.

“Ah…I’m sorry!”

At that moment, Ikusaba-san’s face turned pale.

“I’m sorry! I’m sorry! I’m sorry! I’m sorry! I’m sorry!”

Getting more and more into it, I began to bow my head as well.

“You don’t need to apologize that much…”

“I’m sorry! I’m sorry! I’m sorry! I’m sorry! I’m sorry!”

Even so, I continued to apologize to the point where she almost felt bad, and then I realized how tired I was. Putting everything aside, I was tired. Tired from the confrontation of the Madarais, the conversation with Ikusaba-san about Junko Enoshima, and above all, I just wanted to see Matsuda-kun.

That’s right, I want to see Matsuda-kun!

“Hey, it’s okay if I leave now right?”

With eagerness strong enough to blow away my tiredness, I felt like I had to get out of this place and without waiting for her answer, “Anyway, thanks for helping me! I’ll be leaving now!”

Leaving those words, just as I started running off,

“Oh, wait. I still haven’t told you the whereabouts of Yasuke Matsuda.”

Immediately breaking to a stop, I turned around and faced Ikusaba-san.

“If you don’t know where he is…you probably won’t be able to see him…”

“How do you know where Matsuda-kun is?” I immediately ran up closer to her. “More importantly, if you know then please tell me!”

But as I approached her, I was suddenly taken aback.

Ikusaba-san’s face was radically different from earlier, a grim stern expression. It felt like she was a sniper in a battlefield aiming at her target.

“I don’t like it when things go towards this direction after getting along so well, but this is part of the scenario so I have no choice…”

While murmuring with sadness as if she was about to cry, she shot her freezing glare towards me.

“In order for me to tell you Yasuke Matsuda’s whereabouts, an exchange is required.”

“E-Exchange?”

Ikusaba-san then pointed towards the Madarais laying on the floor, and spoke with a low voice.

“Those people laying over there still don’t know about the last remaining member of the student council, the student council president, being murdered. I’m sure if they found out, they would fall into despair…despair strong enough to push them to even die for the sake of revenge.”

“W-What are you saying?”

My voice filled with tension, even I understood what she was talking

about.

“If you leave them be, I’m sure they would go and kill Yasuke Matsuda.”

Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Soon, those words began to spin around in my head.

“Why does Matsuda-kun need to die…the student council president’s murder has nothing to do with him!”

“That’s not true, it does have something to do with him.”

Ikusaba-san shaked her head.

“Because, Yasuke Matsuda murdered the student council president.”

Murdered. Murdered. Murdered. Murdered. Murdered. Murdered. Murdered. Murdered.

“That’s why we’ll exchange.”

While saying that, she took something out of her pocket and threw it towards my feet.

“Work your hardest for his sake. If you really love Yasuke Matsuda… then you’d work your hardest for him.”

I dropped my eyes towards my feet. Sitting on the moist ground was a knife with Hope’s Peak Academy’s emblem engraved onto it. The moment I laid eyes on it, my heart began beating with an amount of blood strong enough to break a vessel.

“To seize hope for both him and yourself…you must work at your hardest.”

I can’t be expected to—

Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill.

“Y-You can’t be serious right…?”

“No, I’m serious.”

Without time for thinking she immediately responded.

“You will overcome Hope’s Peak Academy here. With the sacrifices of

the Madarais, you will obtain true hope…that is the scenario Junko Enoshima has assigned to you."

What is this…

The scenario Junko Enoshima assigned…

Why?

Why am I forced to do this?

The severe confusion gave me a fever, I was attacked with immense dizziness and ringing in my ears.

"Why!" "Why!" "Why!" "Why!" "Why!"

And then I realized I was gazing up at the sky.

Thick, grey clouds began covering the sky, making it like only this moist, gloomy garden was in the middle of the night, enveloped in silence.

While I stared at the sky absent-mindedly, I could feel the black, helpless emotions inside of me bubbling up. Like the toxic sludge from underground sewers, it dried up like dead grass.

This is…

I stopped and thought with my hazy head.

This is despair.

"To overcome this despair and…seize hope."

Who's voice was that?

Was it mine?

Ikusaba-san's?

Or was it…

But, it already had nothing to do with me.

Suddenly, I reached out my hand towards the silver knife. And then to slice away the dark fog of despair, I wielded the knife in a trance.

Doing so, I felt the texture of flesh.

Beyond the knife standing into the Madarai's bodies, I could feel the blade stabbing all the way through the skin and muscle.

The fresh blood squirting out. The cries of death.

Goosebumps spread across my skin and I instantly felt the pain of my stomach's insides knotting together.

Despite that, I stabbed.

Overcome despair, for the sake of seizing hope for Matsuda-kun and I.

I stabbed and stabbed and stabbed and stabbed and stabbed and stabbed and stabbed and stabbed and stabbed and stabbed and stabbed.

I could hear my screams coming from far away.

They were screams from my broken heart.

AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHH "AAAAAAHHH!"

I then returned to myself.

From there, as if to shake off the delusions floating up into my head, I soon screamed once again.

"I-I-I can't do it!"

While my hand was ridged from reaching out towards the knife, my head ached from fear of the simulation that just flew by my mind.

I won't do it! I have no reason to do this!

"Ah, um…"

Then, i heard the puzzled voice of Ikusaba-san coming from above.

"You know that if you don't overcome despair here, you won't be able to seize hope….right?"

"I-I can't do that!" I screamed while sobbing. "Hope and despair… that's just what you or Junko Enoshima have been talking about right? It has nothing to do with me!"

My throat began to burn up from screaming so much, and my tears and snot mixed together as I crouched towards the ground.

“Uu..H-Help me…Help me Matsuda-kun…”

As if pleading, I continued to cry. Grasping my head, I continued to shamelessly cry.

“Help me…help me Matusda-kun…Matsuda-kun, Matsuda-kun, Matsuda-kun…”

Then, an even further puzzled voice could be heard from Ikusaba-san.

“Um…I don’t really know what to do in these kinds of situations…but anyway, I’ll tell you where Yasuke Matsuda is.”

“….Huh?”

In surprised, I lifted my head up.

“….Huh?”

Ikusaba-san was in surprise as well. Probably because my face was so unsightly from crying.

“You’ll…tell me?”

“Well…if things end at this rate, Junko-chan will get mad at me…”

Hearing that, I scrubbed my face with the sleeves of my uniform, and once again firmly stood up on my two feet. I then slapped my cheeks to focus, and faced Ikusaba-san with a question.

“Then…tell me. Where is Matsuda-kun?”

Ikusaba-san then responded with a light voice.

“Um, Yasuke Matsuda is at the Ex-School Building.”

Once again, the intense itchiness attacked my head.

“Ex-School Building…”

It felt like I heard those words not too long ago somewhere. But it was no time to be dealing with that itchiness right now.

“Got it…so if I go to the Ex-School Building I’ll meet Matsuda-kun right?”

“Yes, that place is supposed to be the planned climax.”

I'm able to meet Matsuda-kun. With that thought in mind, a mysterious power seemed to come up from deep within me. My screaming and shouting and falling into despair from before seemed to all be a lie.

This is…

I felt myself brimming with energy.

This is hope!

"Thanks! I'll be taking off then!"

I then bowed my head towards Ikusaba-san. I had no reason to bow my head towards the sister of the horrible Junko Enoshima who was assisting her in that messed up plan but, this might be the power of hope as well!

"Alright, good luck then. I'll take care of cleaning up what's left here."

Ikusaba-san spoke while looking around at the Madarais laying at her feet.

"After I clean this up I'll go and help Kirigiri-san…then I'll remove Kirigiri-san from this scenario…then everything will go along just like the scenario…so leave the rest to me…"

I was tired of hearing her repeatedly talk about the scenario towards the very end. That's why with a short "Bye!", I immediately ran off.

But as soon as I dashed off, I suddenly noticed something.

While running, I turned around and saw Ikusaba-san absent-mindedly standing still. Lying around her where those four Madarais but, I felt like there was something missing there.

But I couldn't remember what.

But it wasn't the time to think about something like that, and I continued to run straight ahead.

That's right, I don't have the time to be turning around.

I was heading towards Hope Peak's Academy North District's Ex-School Building.

Even without looking at Ryouko Otonashi's Notebook, the path

towards my destination somehow floated up into my head. It looks like I was pretty troubled. Troubled to the point where I couldn't handle it, but if it's to meet Matsuda-kun, then it'll all be okay. I'll be able to get rid of this uneasiness.

That's because if I meet Matsuda-kun, everything will turn back to normal. My head will become normal again, and then I'll be able to return to those peaceful days with Matsuda-kun.

Whatever there may be, whatever may happen, I'll return to those peaceful days of receiving treatment from Matsuda-kun.

That is my ideal happy ending.

What I was heading for wasn't the Ex-School Building, it was towards that happy ending.

Heading towards that happy ending, I ran as fast as I could.

Huh? Rain?

I noticed it while entering the central garden from the back garden of the Biology Laboratory. It seemed like rain began falling at some point. The rain wasn't too hard, but it was strong enough for sounds of it hitting the trees and grass to be heard.

But this level of rain won't be enough to stop me. As the cold rain engulfed my body, I aimed towards the lined up school buildings and dashed off from the East District's central garden.

Due to either the rain or because it was possibly during lecturing hours, there weren't many students around in the central garden. Either way, there were students running as if fleeing from the rain, and others who were calmly walking under umbrellas. As I ran ahead at full speed without any kind of protection from the elements, I must have gotten some odd looks towards my direction.

This kind of thing would normally have nothing to do with me, but for some reason this particular time I felt a bit annoyed.

I felt a violent irritation develop as those people standing from a safe place watched me as if examining some kind of swelling tumor.

Even so, I continued to tell myself that it had nothing to do with me as I ran straight through the central garden.

At that rate, I eventually exited the East District and ended up at the Central Plaza, and then-Once again I caught sight of groups of students. Most likely they were heading back to their dormitories in the South District. Different colored umbrellas in hand, they seemed to enjoy chatting with each other as they slowly walked down the pavement.

Glancing at them from the back of my eye, I dashed off from the pavement.

There probably isn't any clear-cut road leading to the North District's Ex-School Building, so unless I cut through the Central Plaza I won't be able to proceed.

The grass at my feet was wet, and there were puddles developing here and there as well.

Reaching the now half-vacant North District, my figure soon

disappeared from other people's vision, seeing how there wouldn't even be many people in this area on a rainy day like this.

The grass at my feet became more and more bare as I proceeded, and the number of trees began to decrease as well. Eventually the land presented itself to be almost like a wasteland.

After progressing through the wasteland for a bit, an artificial structure came into view.

That's…I see

As I looked up at the building, I began to slow down my running pace.

Hope's Peak Academy Ex-School Building.

Just looking at its solemn appearance didn't give the impression that it was some abandoned building. But…

Not having done so for quite a while, I checked out my Ryouko Otonashi Notebook.

It seemed that this building had already fulfilled its role, at most half a year ago. If that was true, then it wouldn't be strange for this building to still seem like it was used not too long ago.

But the tall fences that surrounded the building seemed to shout that it was already finished. Plates were even stuck on the fences detailing "Hope's Peak Academy North District Planned Construction Land, DO NOT ENTER".

While straightening out my unsteady breath, I walked at a slow pace around the fence. To enter the Ex-School Building, it seemed that there was no other way than to climb over these but,

Then, once again I could feel that itchiness in my head.

Still not used to it, my face grimaced, and then suddenly a thought floated into my head.

Speaking of which, I remember hearing that there were security guards around this area.

Even though I didn't look at my Notebook, I remembered that. Surprised by those turn of events, I came to a halt without thinking, and then, another wave of surprise washed over me.

A number of security guards surrounded me.

“…Eh? Huh?”

In a panic, I frantically looked around me. Speechless and emotionless, almost like if they were lifeless mannequins. All they were doing was simply looking straight at me.

“U-Um…I’m not really anyone suspicious or anything….wait, what?”

Without listening to my excuses, the security guards split up and dispersed.Ignoring what should have been an obvious intruder, they continued their patrol and left.

“Eh? Huh? Um…”

Being left behind, I stood there shocked speechless, and then met eyes with the only remaining security guard.

He’s young?

The face under the helmet was of a high schooler’s, no matter how you looked at it. His mouth twisted into something like a smile, and he brought out a shining object.

It was a medal.

That medal had a bear mascot engraved upon it.

It was half white and half black, it was a peculiar bear mascot.

If I recall correctly that was,

“It was called…Monokuma…”

It happened again. Without even looking back at the Notebook, that thought floated up into my head by itself. It was almost like someone else’s thought was pushed into my head, it was an eerie sensation.

Is this what remembering is?

But this wasn’t the time to be analyzing myself—

Suddenly the right arm of the security guard unexpectedly extended outward.

It seemed like he was pointing to something with that right arm.

Following that direction with my eyes, I was led to a small opening one could crawl into between the fences.

But, why would a security guard tell me something like that?

The moment I returned my eyes towards the security guard, he was already walking away.

Not exactly sure why, I absent-mindedly gazed at his figure moving farther and farther away, as another thought suddenly floated into my brain again. It looked like I remembered yet another thing.

In the end, everyone is just conveniently moving along the Scenario.

Suddenly I felt some kind of heavy fear pressing on me from the back of my head.

But, it'll all be alright.

I desperately convinced myself.

Anyway, if it's to meet Matsuda-kun, then everything will be alright.

That's what I believed.

I believed in Matsuda-kun.

I believed in my feelings for Matsuda-kun.

I believed in the world of myself and Matsuda-kun.

By earnestly believing in him I blew away all my uneasiness, and then moved forward with renewed vigor.

I crawled under the small opening in the fence and reached the back side of the Ex-School Building.

As I walked around the building looking for an entrance, I came across a large entranceway in the front. Possibly due to the building's condition getting worse, the door was half-open, it was pretty obvious that it wasn't locked. I drew closer to it while keeping an eye out, and carefully slipped into the opening. What laid ahead of the door was a dim, dusty entrance hallway.

"…Matsuda-kuuuun"

While calling out his name, I continued to proceed down the entrance hall. Wet noises could be heard coming from my shoes absorbing the moisture at my feet.

"Matsuda-kuuuun. Where are yooooou?"

While raising my voice and peeking down the hallway, I felt like something was out of place.

Isn't it too dark?

Even more so than the entrance hall, the hallway ahead of me seemed to be enveloped by some unnatural darkness.

It was as if not even one ray of light could shine through it.

But it should've still been afternoon. No matter how much it rains, there should've been some sign of the sun's light coming through the windows-

snap

A strange sound rang out in the darkness.

"Wah!"

It wasn't just once, like a chain reaction those sounds began to continuously multiply.

snap snap snap snap snap

One by one, the lights turned on throughout the hallway, and by the time the sounds stopped the whole building was bright with light.

"…Matsuda-kun?"

That was all I could think of.

He must have responded to my voice calling out. With that expectation pushing me forward, I proceeded down the hallway enveloped in artificial light.

"Matsuda-kuuuun! Where are you!"

As I peeked into a passing classroom, "Matsuda-kuuun?" Checking a bathroom, "Matsuda-kuuun" While walking up the stairs, "Matsuda-kun?" Peeking into yet another classroom, "Matsuda-kuuun?" Checking a bathroom, "Matsuda-kuuun" While walking up the stairs, "Matsuda-kun?"

While continuing to go through those actions, I eventually ended up at the highest floor.

Even there while calling out "Hey! Matsuda-kun!" and going through the hallways, bathrooms, and classrooms, I couldn't catch sight of him anywhere.

Getting tired, I decided to catch a quick breath.

Then once again that thought came into mind.

So the Ex-School Building was something like this.

As I walked around the building looking for Matsuda-kun, the atmosphere didn't really give the impression that it was anything like a school.

First of all, there weren't any windows here. From the first floor all the way to the highest floor, the windows in all the hallways and classrooms were boarded up with thick wooden planks, appearing to be the cause of the unnatural darkness. Further more, all the hallways and classrooms had seemingly nonsense, disgusting pieces of artwork with bad taste scattered everywhere.

As a result, any trace of the building being a school was lost.

It was unthinkable that this building was in this state even from when it was being used, but if that was the case, then someone for some reason definitely had to have planned this. But who and why?

"Aah, you must be pretty surprised huh."

“Kyaaaaaaa!”

With no warning whatsoever a voice came out from behind me, and without thinking I jumped up.

In a panic, I turned around and-Huh? There wasn’t anyone there.

“Well that’s to be expected. Even I was surprised by all of this.”

Even so, I could still hear that voice.

Once again, I looked around my surroundings and, as I thought, I couldn’t detect any human figure.

“…Hey, Onee-chan, where are you looking? I’m right here, you know.”

[Onee-chan is the more polite way of saying big sister. It is used occasionally by younger boys when addressing an older girl, and a general term used by people when addressing teenage to young adult women.]

The voice was coming from in front of me, coming right from the hallway.

“Yes, yes. I’m right here.”

Wincing due to the exceedingly strange turn of events, I focused my conscious towards the direction where the voice was coming from. As I continued to stare, a young boy’s figure began to float up.

“Um, a child?”

“Oh, I guess you forgot about me once again!”

The boy looking to be fed up, put his hands onto himself.

“…I’m Yuuto Kamishiro. Class 77’s Super High School Level Spy!”

I immediately opened up the Ryouko Otonashi Notebook and was able to remember before that annoying itching bothered my head.

“Ohhh, Kamishiro-kun!”

“Geez, how many times have I introduced myself by now?”

Displeased, Kamishiro-kun puffed out his cheeks.

"…Wait, why are you in a place like this?"

"That's what I was going to say."

While letting the air out from puffing his cheeks, he spoke

"Actually, how did you even get in here? Weren't there a good amount of security guards wandering around the area? It's nothing for someone with no presence like myself, but I would think it would be impossible for an average person like you to get past all those guards."

I was at a loss for words. There's no way he would believe me if I said that the security guards just let me through, "Um…it just kinda, happened…"

As a result, that was the only explanation I could think of.

"You forgot how you got in here? Oh well, guess there's no choice."

But it seemed like he accepted it one way or the other.

"Well, there's nothing I can do if you already got here."

Kamishiro-kun then began boastfully talking about how he got into the school. From the results of various espionage activities, he caught wind of the secrets connecting the Ex-School Building and the series of incidents occurring, and then sneaked into the building itself not much earlier from when I reached it, it appears.

By the way, it appeared that it was also Kamishiro who found the breaker to the electricity and turned on all the lights.

"But it's pretty impressive that you were able to find the breaker when it was so dark."

"Ahaha, I guess the night vision scope I use in my hobbies was pretty helpful!"

Scared, I decided not to ask about what exactly those hobbies would be.

"Well when I think about it, meeting you here was some good timing. After all, if you, my client, weren't here the Resolution Phase[honestly I don't know what the original text is supposed to translate into] wouldn't be able to start."

"…Huh? Resolution Phase?"

Kamishiro-kun then took out a pastry and with a huge bite stuffed it in his cheeks, and spoke in a proud manner.

“Basically, I already got the full picture of this story down. The next step is to take care of things in a spy-like manner and prevent it from happening, and that’ll be another case complete!”

“Hmm, I see…”

“Ehh?? Isn’t that reaction a bit too weak?”

Kamishiro-kun proceeded to then ridiculously over-react.

But a weak reaction was to be expected, after all, things like the case or the Resolution Phase didn’t matter to me at all.

More importantly, Matsuda-kun.

I need to meet Matsuda-kun!

“…It’ll be alright. Yasuke Matsuda should be heading over here soon.”

“…Huh?”

“You were probably worrying about Yasuke Matsuda right?”

While suppressing his laughter, he shoved the rest of the bread into his mouth and immediately started off in another direction.

“Alright, let’s go. We’ll talk while walking.”

“…Eh? Go as in, where?”

“C’mon, if you don’t hurry I’ll leave you behind!”

Kamishiro-kun then rhythmically got on the stairs, while I hurriedly followed after.

“Hey, Hey wait! You know where Matsuda-kun is?”

“Ahaha, already going off about him, you sure are impatient Onee-chan! Well, I don’t really dislike that part of you however. You know, it’s pretty common in American movies. Those scenes where they start stripping down while roughly getting it on…that kind of impatience really turns me on!”

“Hey, stop screwing around.”

“You’re the one screwing around aren’t you?”

Without thinking my whole body froze when Kamishiro-kun turned around and looked at me.

It was because the look on his face was unexpectedly dangerous and ruthless.

“Matsuda-kun, Matsuda-kun, man you sure are persistent. Just be quiet and listen to what I have to say for now.”

Without any word of confirmation, Kamishiro-kun’s words and gaze put pressure on me, and he then returned to seemingly bouncing down the stairs.

After leaping towards the end of the flight, he once again turned back towards me and-

“What’s wrong Onee-chan? Hurry up!” his face already returned to that innocent smile. “C’mon, hurry up!”

“…A-Alright.”

Confused, I walked down the stairs. After rejoining Kamishiro-kun at the end of the stairs, we continued side-by-side down the next flight.

“Ok, let’s start with Hope’s Peak Academy’s Worst Incident.”

It seemed that his Resolution Phase or whatever has already begun.

“I think you already got the gist of it but, Hope’s Peak Academy’s Worst Incident occurred somewhere in this Ex-School Building. That’s right, everything, started, right, here.”

Connecting everything in one go, that seemed to be the detective-style way of the Resolution Phase.

“It was certainly the worst incident, the worst incident that ever occurred in Hope’s Peak Academy. After all, 13 members of the Student Council composed of the elite were murdered…but there were two people who survived that Worst Incident…one was the Super High School Level Student Council President, Soushun Murasame, who somehow escaped along with suffering major injuries, and the other person was,”

“Izuru Kamukura.”

Wait, what?

Even I was surprised as I blurted those words out without thinking.

“How rare to see you remembering something…”

Kamishiro-kun’s strange gaze then stuck onto me.

“…Well, whatever.”

He soon moved on and began explaining once again.

“Izuru Kamukura was hiding something, the fact that he was an individual amazing enough to be called Super High School Level Hope. Kamukura was researched on by Hope’s Peak Academy, they raised him, he was the result of their collective effort, every talent and ability was forced into his body that was of the Super High School Level Class. He was truly Hope’s Peak Academy’s Hope. That’s why the school hid the existence of that secret, to the point where no student knew anything about Izuru Kamukura, whether he was a boy or a girl…he was raised completely sheltered.”

Sheltered upbringing…living completely closed off from the world, I was the same as him. I was shocked that it sounded almost exactly like myself.

“But…that Kamukura guy caused a ridiculous incident to occur.”

Kamishiro-kun’s tone then seemed to become more serious.

“Kamukura of all things caused that bizarre mass murder to occur within the school…it really was the worst. After all, the person who was praised to be Super High School Level Hope more than anyone else caused such a despair-inducing incident to occur. If it wasn’t the worst, then I don’t know what it is.”

That was the reason why it was called Hope’s Peak Academy’s Worst Incident, that certainly was something the school would label it as. The existence they raised together as a collective effort committing such an unprecedented bizarre murder crime, there wasn’t anything to call it but the worst.

“But that’s not all there is. What’s even worse is that not only did the school not bring light to the situation, they attempted to fully conceal it.”

As he spoke while rhythmically stepping down the stairs, I was completely sucked into what he was saying. Without making any sort of response, without writing anything in my Notebook, I just intently listened to what he had to say.

“The school was most likely afraid…after all, if people were to catch wind of that incident, the foundation of the school’s principal “Talent is humanity’s hope” would crumble. If that happened, the school would lose authority, and if handled improperly they wouldn’t last much longer…that’s why the school is trying to hush up the incident. Well, there was probably pressure from outside sources as well, but the ones we should feel sorry for are those Student Council guys…”

Student Council, those words snuck into my head, and along with that itchiness, it forced that memory to surface.

That memory was the Madarai brothers, their faces as they relentlessly chased after that incident.

“After all, those guys all died in vain. It really is awful. It’s like as long as it’s for the sake of the school’s Hope, anything can become a stepping stone…even if it wasn’t the Preparatory Department, that kind of thinking is to be expected…[okay I have no clue what this last part was trying to say so whatever]

I shook my head and chased those images of Madarai’s faces out.

They don’t have anything to do with me.

This wasn’t the time to be thinking about them.

“And then, the ones who led this process of covering the evidence were none other than the top of the top, the Committee Board members themselves. They hid the fact that Izuru Kamukura was not just a survivor, but the perpetrator of the entire incident.”

“And that’s…where this Ex-School Building comes in?”

After not doing so for quite some time, I responded, and Kamishiro-kun quickly nodded.

“Either way, there’s no reason to ignore the place where the incident occurred. Might as well check it out while we’re here carefully snooping around, right?”

While descending from the 2nd floor stairs to the 1st floor stairs,

Kamishiro-kun continued going on indifferently.

“But what really was a miscalculation on the school’s side was…while they were moving along assuming they covered up the incident, there was still another troublesome individual that hadn’t been dealt with.”

“Junko Enoshima…”

The moment I spoke those words, we reached the 1st floor.

“…Over here, come with me.”

Without a moment of hesitation, Kamishiro-kun continued to walk forward.

“The first person to discover the truth of that incident was Junko Enoshima. Then, by dragging out Izuru Kamukura…she aimed to overthrow Hope’s Peak Academy.”

While continuing to walk, both Kamishiro-kun’s destination and Resolution Phase seemed to be reaching the core.

“What happened afterwards was completely aligned with her plan. The disappearance of the Committee Board old men shows that. That was definitely her doing. She probably kidnapped them and forced Izuru Kamukura’s whereabouts from them with brute force but… Junko Enoshima really is someone to fear. Geez, and just how is she Super High School Level Fashion Girl?”

Hearing Kamishiro-kun’s words, that itchiness brought up a flashback, my memories were reviving.

This time it was that concrete room with those iron bars. Those corpses of the old men whose eyes were hideously sewn together were there.

“…Onee-chan. What are you doing just spacing out like that? Over here, over here!”

Kamishiro-kun was already standing far away, calling out towards me, and I responded.

“Oh, sorry…”

I jogged over to where Kamishiro-kun was standing. He stopped at the very end of the first floor hallway. There was nothing in front of him but walls.

“It should probably be around here…”

“What should be here?”

“…Ah! It’s this!”

Raising his voice, he pointed towards a small opening in the wall.

“I borrowed this from the security guards outside but…”

While speaking he pulled out a long rod-like object from his pocket, it looked like some kind of key. Kamishiro-kun then inserted that key into the wall. A clink could be heard coming from his small hand.

“Jackpot! I was thinking it could’ve been this! I investigated like crazy all over this place but there weren’t any other suspicious areas!”

Sounding very proud of himself, Kamishiro-kun turned the key.

Along with the sound of rumbling, the door slid open like one of those automated doors.

Past that door led simply a straight, long and narrow passageway. An imposing double door could be seen standing at the end.

“W-What…is this place…?”

“I said it earlier didn’t I? This is where Izuru Kamukura is hidden.”

Kamishiro-kun sounded extremely excited.

“…Matsuda-kun is here too?”

“He could be already here or he could be on his way….either way, Yasuke Matsuda will definitely show up.”

Kamishiro-kun then proceeded to step foot into the passageway, and I followed suit.

Our steps rang about in the cool, dim passageway as we walked straight forward towards the back. My lips were getting dry and I constantly felt the need to lick them.

When we finally reached the end we stopped for the time being.

Without saying anything, Kamishiro-kun put his hand on the door. Imitating his process I did the same, and I saw that he was taking a

deep breath. It seemed that even he was a bit nervous. We then exerted pressure at the same time, and the doors opened with an exaggerated groan.

Past the door laid about 15 square meters of nothingness that spread out. With the ceiling and pillars all being completely bare, it was truly a dreary and tasteless room.

“…Onee-chan, over there.”

Kamishiro-kun was pointing towards the corner of the room.

There stood a simple elevator one would see in a factory of some sorts.

“That must be it.”

Immediately after he spoke, Kamishiro-kun energetically ran straight towards the elevator. While I stood in hesitation, he manually pulled open the doors to the elevator and shouted out.

“C’mon, hurry up! You want to meet Yasuke Matsuda right?”

Matsuda-kun

Those words pumped me up.

That’s right. The only reason I came to this dangerous place was for Matsuda-kun. I’m sure everything will get resolved if I can meet Matsuda-kun. This nightmare, my brain, everything will be exceptionally resolved into a happy ending waiting for me.

That’s why I have to go!

Determined, I ran straight towards the elevator and jumped on with that momentum.

The moment I got on, my legs began to tremble and, I knew I regretted it.

“…I’m sure this elevator was made with the sole purpose to hide Kamukura. Man, they really were exceptionally careful, here we go.”

Sounding quite amazed, he then took out the control panel from the floor and put his hand on it. There were but only two buttons. “Floor 1” and “Floor B”, Kamishiro-kun then pressed “Floor B” without any hesitation.

A ridiculously loud sound could be heard from the motor, and the floor began to heavily tremble. After I continued to tremble from uneasiness, the elevator began to steadily descend.

"…Hehe, exciting isn't it?"

Immediately, Kamishiro-kun began to raise his voice into a cheer.

"It looks like you really are enjoying this…aren't you afraid?"

"Ahaha, of course I'm afraid!"

Kamishiro-kun responded with a smile on his face.

"To be honest, I'm actually terrified, to the point where I want to run away. Man, it's the first time I've ever felt like this. I can't believe someone like me is getting scared over this…but, that's why this is so fun! After all, if I can overcome this fear, I'll develop even further as a spy! That's why I won't run away. For the sake of powering up as a spy, I won't run away!"

Then, a simple question floated into my head.

"Hey, Kamishiro-kun. Why are you-"

"Why am I so persistent about my talent? That's a silly question, Onee-chan."

He anticipated my question and responded.

"It's the same thing as asking a swimmer 'Why are you still swimming if it hurts so much?'…it's only natural to be so fixated on it. After all, that's all I have."

While talking, Kamishiro-kun raised his hands up as far as he could.

"Oh, Onee-chan, you should stretch out your body as well. To prepare for the unexpected you know? C'mon, puff out that chest!"

"…I'll pass."

"Ahaha! I thought you'd say that!"

After smiling with that innocent face, he returned to that serious look of his.

"If you take away my activities as a spy, I'd have nothing left. An

extremely unnoticeable child…that's all I'd be. But I do have a talent. Because we have a talent, we can't choose how we live our lives. The moment we were given our talents, we already started living in our set scenario…ha, what a one-sided lifestyle huh?"

Because you have a talent you are assigned a predestined fate to struggle with. If that's called a one-sided lifestyle, that probably is an accurate definition.

"But, we actually desire that one-sided lifestyle ourselves. That's why we came to Hope's Peak Academy. To continue to struggle with the talents we're proud of. Along with the rest of the students of this school, you're the same aren't you Onee-chan? That's why we have to keep moving forward, no matter how scared we are. This isn't some cheap line like "Believe in yourself", this is our duty. If we ran away, that'd be like rejecting our very existence. That's why we have to continue to struggle."

Honestly, more than anyone else, my very being that continued to doubt myself, couldn't understand Kamishiro-kun's feelings at all.

After all, if I was scared, I could just run away.

It doesn't have anything to do with me.

"…Oh, but I'm not just scared, you know."

Kamishiro-kun appeared to be justifying himself.

"Well, it's true that I'm scared but…I'm just as excited however. Izuru Kamukura, Junko Enoshima, the elites of the Student Council, Yasuke Matsuda, and the Committee Board…the chance to resolve the chaos that intertwines all of them. I'm sure if I'd be able to solve everything, my name would be carved into Hope's Peak Academy's history. The legendary spy who rescued the Super High School Level Hope, Yuuto Kamishiro!"

"…Eh? Rescue?"

Without thinking I responded. Even though I've been listening all this time without a word, but that's why I was so interested in the wording.

"You mean what I meant by rescue? You know, Izuru Kamukura is the culprit of Hope's Peak Academy Worst Incident right?"

“The point is, Izuru Kamukura is a victim too, that’s, what, I, mean, you know?”

Suddenly I felt like everything went silent, that’s the bizarre feeling that washed over me.

“But, it’s the Committee Board members who decided not to let anyone discover this “horrifying truth”. That’s why they hid only Izuru Kamukura down here using that reasoning…if I manage to uncover the real truth and chase down the “true culprit”, wouldn’t that be the level of something left behind in Hope’s Peak Academy’s history?”

Suddenly, his eyes began to sparkle.

“I don’t really want appreciation from the school or anything but, just think about it. The image of the principle kneeling with tears streaming from his eyes, thanking me….aha, ahahahaha!”

Kamishiro-kun, while smiling, began spinning around. The sight of excitement was similar to one of a dog greeting someone.

“Actually, I already imagined the whole thing! ‘Hope’s Peak Academy’s savior, Super High School Level Spy, Kamishiro Yuuto!’ or something! Ahahahahahahaha, now that would stand out! That would stand out like crazy! It stands out to the point where it would completely blow away my lack of presence!”

At that point, I felt like I finally caught a glimpse of his true feelings.

I’m sure he believed in his talent, and at the same time he detested it.

It was distorted, but most likely he was not the only one.

Anyone who would be assigned with a talent would probably somehow fall to towards that feeling.

And then it happened right after that.

clang

Along with that sound came heavy shaking, and the sound of the motor finally stopping rang out. It seemed that the elevator has reached its destination.

"…Looks like we're here."

Finally ceasing his ridiculous dancing, he let out a quiet voice as the elevator calmly returned. And then while he walked towards the door, "Now, I wonder if the Masterminds are already here…"

"Hold on."

Without thinking, I held onto the door Kamishiro-kun was heading towards.

"…Hm? What's wrong? You want a kiss before the decisive battle begins?"

"No, it's not that…"

I had a bad feeling about this. A really bad feeling. But nonetheless, I asked him. I had to ask him.

"Hey, what do you mean by Mastermind?"

Kamishiro-kun's eyebrows twitched.

"Ahhh, that was careless of me. I was planning to reveal everything about the accomplices once I captured everybody…"

He then licked his lips with a bitter smile.

"Accomplice…"

The only person who could fit that category would be that girl. Actually, she's the only person I could think of.

"You're talking about…Mukuro Ikusaba right?"

"Huh!? She's suspicious?!"

Unexpectedly, Kamishiro-kun appeared to be surprised.

"Wow, I didn't know that! Then that means there's two accomplices, huh? Well, well, well…this is just one huge family!"

This time, it was my turn to be surprised.

"Wait, if you didn't mean Mukuro Ikusaba, then…"

"Of course, I'm talking about Yasuke Matsuda."

At that moment, I was hit with shockwave so powerful that the word “shockwave” wouldn’t even describe it properly. My heart began beating as fast as it could, it’s agonizing screams reverberating all throughout my body. A cold shiver ran up my back, numbing my spine and taking my breath away.

“Well, I should probably tell you this right now but…Izuru Kamukura isn’t someone who necessarily should be called the culprit in the first place. He was just some poor fellow who got wrapped up in all this chaos. The real person who set this all up was Junko Enoshima. Basically, she wasn’t just the first to discover this case, but the Mastermind pulling the strings from the shadows. The one who secretly worked as an assistant for her is none other than Yasuke Matsuda…but I wonder if it’s weird for a man to be doing that sort of thing.” [Okay, I don’t know if this is a pun or if the characters used for “assistant” in this case have a feminine connotation or not but, the first two characters used in 女房役(assistant) mean something along the lines of a wife or a female advisor, so I’m guessing that’s why Kamishiro mentions Matsuda being a man.]

Kamishiro-kun’s starting point for his Resolution Phase was such an unexpected topic that all I could do was stand there and listen.

“I’m pretty sure those two are the only ones aware of their relationship. Well, the school doesn’t know about it at least. Otherwise they wouldn’t even request help from Yasuke Matsuda in the first place…or maybe that was the very reason…anyway, as a result, Enoshima was able to successfully avoid investigation from the school.”

I became a brainless mannequin that couldn’t even perform the simplest of responses.

By the way, who is this Yasuke Matsuda he’s been talking about? What Yasuke Matsuda would that be?

“But, cooperating with them wasn’t the only thing Yasuke Matsuda did. Like I said before how the disappearance of the Committee Board members was the work of Enoshima…It appears that Matsuda was involved with that case as well. Man, they really are a great combination!”

I had no idea what he was talking about.

In fact, I rejected comprehension of his words with all my might.

By learning things I already don't want to know, my head will hurt. My chest will suffer. I'll feel like throwing up.

"Also, the conclusive evidence that ties them together…I've seen it. Well, it was because of witnessing that evidence that I was able to get this far to the truth but…"

I don't want to hear any more!

But as if stabbing me, he continued talking.

"….Junko, Enoshima, and, Yasuke, Matsuda's, love, scene."

Junko Enoshima and Yasuke Matsuda's love scene?

What is that.

Really, what is that.

What is that. Really, what is that. What is that. Really, what is that. What is that. Really, what is that. What is that. Really, what is that. Really, what is that. What is that. Really, what is that. What is that. Really, what is that. What is that. What the heck is that?????

I heard the sound of something crashing down.

It was the sound of my nerves crashing down dominos in a chain reaction. The dominos with the words "Yasuke Matsuda", "Junko Enoshima", and "Love scene" written on them all came crashing down like an avalanche.

Everything was arranged.

Everything was arranged by Junko Enoshima.

My relationship with Matsuda-kun. All my feelings towards Matsuda-kun, were arranged by her.

Matsuda-kun. Matsuda-kun. Matsuda-kun. Matsuda-kun. Matsuda-kun.

Matsuda-kun?

Betrayed. that word played in the back of my ears.

Betrayed, fooled, used, manipulated, that was the truth.

The truth of this incident.

Yasuke Matsuda. Junko Enoshima. Love Scene. They clattered as they were crashing down.

At the same time the door was clattering while Kamishiro-kun was prying it open.

“C’mon, Onee-chan. For the time being, let’s get out of here. We’ll talk about the rest once everyone’s together…c’mon, hurry up, hurry up!”

Still in a daze, I was pushed out of the elevator by Kamishiro-kun.

As I staggered out clumsily, I found myself in a massively tall circular hall, it was like a miniature theater.

“Hey, this place is pretty nice.”

Kamishiro-kun’s voice coming from behind me echoed across the hall.

“Yep. This could actually be a fitting stage for my Resolution Phase to begin in.”

It certainly looked like a stage developed with something in mind. There was nothing there. There wasn’t anything that would give the impression of anyone living here. Interior design was kept to a minimum with wallpaper and carpets, and the only furniture were a bed and a drawer. There was a bare western-style toilet sitting in the corner as well. Either a wide extravagant prison, or a low-budget play setting. That was the impression it gave.

Although what drew my attention more was, the fact that no one was there.

Junko Enoshima, Mukuro Ikusaba, Matsuda-kun, or even Izuru Kamukura who was supposed to be hidden here, none of them could be seen.

This was a situation instead of any of the important individuals Kamishiro-kun just spoke of, only the outsiders Yuuto Kamishiro and Ryouko Otonashi were standing.

But, I wondered if that really was so.

Maybe I’ve been making a huge misunderstanding. All this time I’ve thought that I hadn’t have met Izuru Kamukura even once, but I wonder if that really was the case?

Maybe he’s been watching over me all this time. Maybe the person

I've been looking has been watching over me all this time.

Basically, Izuru Kamukura's true identity was—

Yuuto Kamishiro?

I immediately turned around.

But, Kamishiro-kun wasn't there.

The moment I thought that, my vision perceived Kamishiro-kun's appearance.

He was crouching at my feet.

No, he was more like kneeling down on the ground.

But even so, our eyes met.

I instantly jumped back.

My shock towards such an illogical development.

My horror towards such an incoherent result.

The pressure in my skull grew to a point where it wouldn't be surprising if my nose started to bleed, and my [nerves?] began trembling to the point where they wouldn't connect properly.

Kamishiro-kun, unrelated to him kneeling down on the ground, was looking not at the floor, but at the ceiling.

That's impossible.

To turn one's head all the way towards their back, that's impossible, for, a, living, human.

Basically, that's what it was.

He was already not one of the living.

Kamishiro-kun with his head turned 180 degrees back and glaring at the ceiling was completely stiff.

The only thing that appeared to be living was the red stream of blood dabbling out of his mouth.

He would already show no response to anyone's voice, or anyone's

words.

This was too much for me.

It was so much for me to the point where my conscious couldn't fully take on the scene of someone dying in front me. Due to that, all my reactions slowed down. If this was true, I would have already ran away from here. After all, the first thing to come to mind would be the fact that the person who did this to Kamishiro-kun must be very close by.

But, I was too slow.

"Poor kid."

A figure appeared next to the elevator.

It was a slim fair-skinned man, wearing a dirty shirt and pants that were of Hope's Peak Academy.

"If only he didn't meddle with Junko Enoshima's affairs…then maybe he wouldn't have met such a brutal end."

Letting out those words with his face down, not one single emotion could be felt.

"W-Who are you?"

While I inquired, trembling, he lifted his face as if he only just noticed me.

"Are you…talking to me?"

He looked exhausted.

A face of someone who lost everything.

The face of someone who lost all his thoughts, all his senses, and all his emotions.

"…You don't remember me?"

After the man responded with a cold voice, he spoke again with an even colder one.

"Why don't you remember?"

“W-Why I don’t remember…well…I-I easily forget things…”

Struck by fear and confusion, I was in complete panic.

“U-Um…hold on a minute please!”

Flustered, I dropped my eyes towards Ryouko Otonashi’s Notebook, and it was at that moment.

I was hit by that wave of itchiness.

That itchiness soon turned into pain. But it was a pain that brought fever. It was like warning signal. The frictional heat coming from the conflict of the remembering Ryouko Otonashi and the forgetting Ryouko Otonashi, that was the cause of the pain.

“Does Izuru Kamukura ring any bells?”

“Eh….?”

Hearing the words coming from that unexpected murmur, the pain went away all at once.

“…Is that true?”

The man right in front of me was, Izuru Kamukura.

The result of Hope’s Peak Academy’s collaborative effort, Hope’s Peak Academy’s symbol.

The man known as Super High School Level Hope.

Then, why?

He looked at me with eyes full of sadness as if he was begging me to rescue him from a bottomless swamp.

Why was he looking at me with such sad eyes?

I don’t know. I don’t know but, those eerie eyes caused me to avert my eyes from his without thinking, but my gaze landed on the eyes, seemingly searching for salvation, of the corpse of Kamishiro-kun, and I once again averted my eyes in a panic.

“It would have been better he didn’t find out…”

Possibly following my gaze, he muttered as he looked down on

Kamishiro-kun.

“If he didn’t get involved, it wouldn’t have ended this way…”

I felt like those words were aimed at me as well, and immediately I felt as if my life was in danger.

“But, you’re different.”

“Huh…?”

“Everything I’ve done so far…you have a need to know.”

A need to know, Huh? Why me?

Before I could ask that question, he let out a big sigh.

“Besides…I also need more time to think…that’s why I’ve decided to talk a bit more before I make my decision…”

Mumbling to himself, it was as if he was only reciting from a script. Scared of his current state, I began to try looking around the room without getting noticed. But, other than a ventilation duct, there didn’t seem to be any place where I could escape to. The only exit was the elevator, in which Izuru Kamukura was standing, blocking the entrance.

“Well…I guess I should start with Junko Enoshima’s goals.”

Scratching his head while speaking, he didn’t seem to bother meeting my eyes, rather, he seemed to be avoiding them.

“Hope’s Peak Academy’s Worst Incident doesn’t really mean much to Junko Enoshima in the first place…”

“…Eh?”

With just those words, my attention was fully drawn.

Hope’s Peak Academy’s Worst Incident…doesn’t mean much?

“Junko Enoshima just wanted to stir up the pent-up emotions of the Preparatory Department. She got the Super High School Level Hope involved in that incident solely for that reason, and then incited those guys…no, it wasn’t something simple like inciting, it was brainwashing.”

“Brainwashing…”

Pain along with violent itching brought up that scene in my mind.

The monitor’s visuals I saw past the Monokuma Heads in the underground facility. Crushing heads, cut faces, agonizing screams, the Mutual Killing red lumps of flesh.

“She used me and the student council as sacrifices solely for that purpose. For the guys who were just treated as leftovers, she threw the school’s proud elites into a game of Mutual Killing…it truly was the worst incident wasn’t it?”

“Mutual Killing…?”

While bearing the tight tension that wrapped around my chest taking my breath away, I squeezed the question out of myself.

“M-Mutual Killing…what exactly do you mean?”

“First of all, Hope’s Peak Academy’s Worst Incident wasn’t just simply a mass murder, it was Mutual Killing instigated by Junko Enoshima.”

Instigated by Junko Enoshima.

Mutual Killing?

Huh? Killing each other?

” Enoshima used the Ex-School Building due to its state as a closed off vicinity, locked the Student Council and Super High School Hope inside, and caused them to kill each other utilizing various traps. Scattering weapons, threatening to kill everyone if a murder didn’t occur, murdering in plain sight to demonstrate a lesson, and so on. She was trying to make them doubt each other, to kill each other…it was almost like she was just wanted to experiment. She really is messed up…”

Kamukura was talking as if it were someone else’s affairs. Trapped between fear and confusion, all I could do was stand there and listen.

“…And then we ended up killing each other. There was no other hope of living. Enoshima had the Preparatory Department watch the school’s prized Student Council and Super High School Level Hope our disgusting methods of killing and staining each other with despair. Those scenes were vividly presented.”

He then paused and took a breath.

But soon his emotionless voice once again echoed across the room.

“I’m sure she planned everything to have Izuru Kamukura survive at the end. It was the worst ending for the guys at the Preparatory Department…to see their hated Super High School Level Hope kill everyone else’s hope and survive, it must have been an especially “bad ending” for them…not only that, the school hiding this sin was probably also what Junko Enoshima had planned. That’s why the Preparatory Department grew to not only despise Super High School Level Hope, but the entire school.”

In the end, everything went completely as Junko Enoshima had planned.

Everything followed her scenario perfectly.

“B-But, for what reason…for what reason did she brainwash the Preparatory Department? That must have been to destroy Hope’s Peak Academy as well…”

“…Not only that.”

Kamukura then finally looked at me.

Peeking from the small opening in his long pitch-black hair, he stared at me.

“Her goal is…much more outrageous.

“O-Outrageous?”

“To her…brainwashing the Preparatory Department was merely planting the seeds. The Worst Incident for Hope’s Peak Academy… that’s all that is to her.

Kamukura mercilessly hurled those words towards me. I was controlled only for that purpose, and then destroyed. I was too late in realizing it…no, I was just desperately trying not to realize it. I didn’t want to believe that she was so obsessed with despair, that’s the truth. The despair-filled truth that I’m involved with this incident.”

“H-Hey…What does you and Junko Enoshima have to do with each-”

“What do I have to do with?”

His words were suddenly filled with intense emotion for just a moment.

“What does this incident mean to you? Are you going to go with your classic ‘nothing to do with me’? If it has nothing to do with you, why are you remembering it? If it really has nothing to do with you…then it’d be best to just let that memory be lost forever.”

“…Eh?”

Why does Kamukura know my saying?

And how did he know about me remembering?

“I was right, wasn’t I? About you remembering? That’s why you can’t remember me? You remembered that I wasn’t a particularly important person to you…so that’s why you can’t remember?”

Kamukura then revealed his eyes, their glint was tainted with deadly hatred.

“…You’re such a bitch.”

“Huh….?”

Then, an impossible thought floated into my head.

In order to deny that impossible thought, I asked.

“…W-Who are you? You’re not Izuru Kamukura?”

“Of course I’m not you imbecile.”

He then spitted out those words.

“I’m Yasuke Matsuda.”

“In the end, you didn’t remember. You remembered other things, just not me…damn it, this is just horrible. For you to believe me so easily when I said I was Kamukura…this really is just horrible. Does my existence barely mean anything to you?”

“…Huh? Eh? W-What?”

I didn’t know what to say. An intense chill assaulted my spine, and my teeth began to chatter like a drum.

“A-A-Are you really…M-Matsuda-kun…?”

“The real Izuru Kamukura has been taken from here long time ago. That means you and I are the only ones left…almost as if someone planned this all out.”

That impossible string of thought that floated in my head took the form of a concrete truth. I desperately opened up Ryouko Otonashi’s Notebook and flipped through the pages in a frenzy, searching for anything that would deny this impossible truth.

Then, after a while, my hands stopped.

In the Notebook were an amazing amount of portraits detailing Matsuda-kun. Looking up and confirming the individual in front of me one more time, the scattered puzzle pieces in my thoughts immediately were placed back together.

“B-But why…? How come I’m not-”

The heartbeat in my chest, the rise of emotions-

“…I know. You’re not feeling anything.”

Ironically, those words proved that he was Matsuda-kun.

After all, the only other person who knew my method in recognizing Matsuda-kun was, Matuda-kun himself.

“That’s because you’re beginning to remember things again. Because you’ve began to regain your memory…you’ve stopped thinking about me.”

“…Eh?”

“In the end, that shows how my existence wasn’t anything special to

you. But, you forgot about that fact…that's why you were filled with such emotion towards me."

Matsuda-kun isn't important to me?

Because I forgot that, I thought he was important to me?

"W-What are you talking about…I don't get it…"

Then that intense itching entered my brain again.

I remembered. The things I would have said to Matsuda-kun when meeting him, the things I would have done when meeting him, why I wanted to even meet him so bad in the first place. I remembered the reasons for everything.

"W-What is this…why…"

Suddenly, I wasn't able to believe anything.

Not Matsuda-kun, not myself,

Not even the world.

I spontaneously began stepping back. But, those legs immediately began to stop. Behind me stood a wall blocking my way, so I just stopped and stood there.

Matsuda-kun began taking steps as if pursuing me, impatiently moving forward.

"M-Matsuda-kun? What's wrong…?"

I cried out with a voice tinged with terror.

He responded with a pale face.

Tension building to the point where it could take my breath away, filled with fear I spoke that name.

"C-Could it be…Junko Enoshima's fault?"

He stopped in his tracks and stared at me with a piercing glare.

"…Ah, that must it be it."

That sharp glare felt as if it pierced my entire body.

These are Matsuda-kun's eyes?

Are you really Matsuda-kun?

I quickly swallowed those words almost coming out of my throat. I could tell that they would only make matters worse.

"…Hey, Matsuda-kun. Let's stop this."

Being cornered by Matsuda-kun like this, pleading was all I could do.

"How about we just head back to the laboratory? We could just relax and chat while you perform treatment on me. If we do that… everything will go back to normal!"

By the end of my pleading, my voice changed into a scream.

After all, this is just wrong!

This has to be wrong!

"…It's already too late."

But, Matsuda-kun turned his head.

"I can't go back anymore. Neither you nor I…we can't go back…"

Hearing his freezing voice, my whole body quickly began to grow cold.

"W-Why are you saying that?"

"Why are YOU spouting these cruel words."

Continuing with that freezing voice, he spoke with rage and irritation.

"You still can't remember what I've done to protect Junko Enoshima? I see, then I'll make you remember."

"I-It's alright! Let's just forget about this and get away from this place!"

"Nothing will change even if we forget, no one knows that better than you do!"

"I don't know anything!"

Reaching my limit, I shrieked with all my might.

But Matsuda-kun, without paying it mind-

“…Alright, just hear me out.”

But, why was he speaking with such a sad face?

I’m the sad one here.

“Hope’s Peak Academy’s Worst Incident…everything changed because of it. No, I finally realized it because of that incident. The fact that my life which I thought was completely normal, was actually a fake scenario set up to control me….”

Those words were not directed towards anyone, not even me, but towards himself.

“I’ve been fooled by Junko Enoshima all this time…completely fooled…but even so, I couldn’t stay away from her…I thought I could save her. I thought I would be able to stop her…that’s what I was made to believe.”

His voice immediately began to stain with bitterness.

“In order to protect her, I concealed her existence itself. But regardless of that, she went ahead and even killed the Committee Board members…that’s why I went as far as to hide those corpses. I dealt with the evidence for her sake.”

As my ears took in his words, my mind began playing through all the scenes that had occurred up to this point. There was no time to even feel the itching.

“Not only that…I even murdered people for her sake. In order to silence Soushun Murasame, who knew the truth about the incident… it’s the same with that Yuuto Kamishiro…for her sake, I couldn’t let them live. That’s why…I killed them…”

I was completely submerged by the torrent of truth blasting out of Matsuda-kun. But there was something I needed to know no matter what, so I struggled to keep my head above the waves as I attempted my question.

“I-Is she really that important…? Junko Enoshima…is really that…i-important to you…?”

“She is.”

Matsuda-kun responded with no hesitation.

“W-Why is she…so important to you?”

As my tears of confusion and fear pushed me against the flood, I struggled forward as I frantically raised my feeble voice.

“It’s because of what she said to me. What she said to me when I lost what was once important to me. ‘From now on, I’ll be what’s important to you.’ It was ridiculously impudent…but thanks to that impudence, I was prevented from being all alone. She’s not family, a lover, or even a friend…but she’s someone just as important to me as any of those.”

Just as important as any of those, that’s how Matsuda-kun felt about Junko Enoshima.

It felt like everything was over.

No, rather, everything was over from the beginning. I had no chance of winning from the start.

Someone who had no past had no chance of competing with Junko Enoshima.

Frustration, jealousy, there was none of that.

‘It’s over’ was all I could feel.

I let out a huge breath. Contained in that breath was my resignation to the entire world.

And then it happened.

A clashing sound could be heard, and Matsuda-kun instantly turned around.

The scene past his shoulder was laid out for me.

I could see a girl standing in the elevator.

“Look’s like…I was right on time…”

With showy makeup as if straight from a fashion magazine, and huge inflated fluffy blonde hair. The uniform was popped open enough for a ridiculous amount of cleavage, along with an insanely short skirt from which long, slender white legs ran down.

“Junko Enoshima!”

I shouted out with confidence.

“Junko Enoshima…?”

Matsuda-kun mumbled mixed with doubt.

Huh?

“Oh, it’s not like I came here to get in your way or anything…”

Without even a word being said, she began explaining herself.

“I just came here to provide the supplementary explanation…it appears to be the right scenario for this…”

The blonde haired girl with showy makeup unmatchingly spoke in a hesitant manner, wait, isn’t that kind of weird?

“Um, well this explanation…you can probably tell from my appearance but, Needs be that I am to follow Junko-chan’s Scenario, only to enact this part…yeah, that’s what this is.”

Then I was once again attacked by that severe itching. It was so bad that I felt like I wanted to claw my hands into my brain, and then immediately after that-Along with feeling like my vision opened up, I remembered.

I remembered the face of the girl standing in front of me.

This face I’ve been seeing was not Junko Enoshima, but someone else.

That’s right, that would be Mukuro Ikusaba’s face.

But, at the same time another question floated up in my head. If the me right now was able to recognize Mukuro Ikusaba, what about the past forgetful me? Showy makeup, blonde hair, popped open uniform, insanely short skirt, if I saw that disguised girl, would I be able to connect things together and realize it’s Mukuro Ikusaba?”

“Then, does this mean…the Junko Enoshima I’ve know all this time…”

“I’m sorry.”

The girl bowed her head.

“To explain things…the Junko Enoshima you’ve met was really me disguised as her.”

Disguised…Basically, a fake?

“But, it’s not like I did that because I wanted to…it was because Junko-chan told me to…that’s why even my lines were set up by Junko-chan…”

Then, what about the real Junko Enoshima?

“So, this is the most important part but, the reason why I did all of this was-”

“Because I hid Junko Enoshima, right?”

Matsuda-kun’s irritated words interrupted her.

“Because I hid Junko Enoshima, the real her is gone…and taking advantage of that, you become Junko Enoshima. Doing so, you make this one believe in Junko Enoshima’s existence.”

“…U-Um, what are you guys talking about?”

Make me believe in Junko Enoshima’s existence? But why?

I was completely lost.

“Basically, Enoshima anticipated my actions. She saw through my plan in hiding her…and is now simply spectating my actions in amusement.”

Spectating?

I frantically looked around the hall. There must have been something here indicating that someone was spectating us but, there weren’t any peeping holes or hidden cameras anywhere. Huh? Why?

“This is ridiculous…to think she’d be this driven by despair…I don’t want to believe this but, she must have gotten near me at some point…”

Whatever he was about to say, it quickly faded away.

I was already incapable of understanding his feelings.

His frustration towards Junko Enoshima.

His resentment against Junko Enoshima.

To the point of despair, I couldn't understand anything.

But, there was one thing that was clear to me.

Once again to the point of despair, very clear to me.

"He must love her…but at the same time, hate her right?"

"That's right…"

Matsuda-kun quietly nodded.

He confirmed my thoughts.

I was right to give up.

There was nothing I could but to give up and let everything end.

This is the end of my world.

This is the end of the world of Matsuda-kun and I.

The moment I gave up, the curtains of my soul began to slowly fall-
thump

Huh?

"That's why…I have to end this."

While covering his face with both hands, Matsuda-kun let out a huge sigh. He then lifted his face with eyes brimming with unwavering determination.

"It's likely that my desire to protect her was…true despair. That's why unless I end this…my despair won't end either."

That was the voice of someone who gave up on everything.

"That's why, I have no choice but to end this…"

His eyes were full of anger, sadness, love, and hatred, all boiled and concentrated together. But even then, there was a mysterious calmness expressed on his face. *thump thump*

Huh? But why?

“I didn’t want Junko Enoshima to get involved with others…I thought I would be protecting her that way…”

Matsuda-kun began to close our distance at a slow pace.

“That’s why I hid her…that’s why I desperately tried to hide her…”

thump thump thump thump

As Matsuda-kun drew closer, the beats in my heart grew louder and louder.

“But it was pointless. My actions did nothing. What I did meant nothing to Enoshima…in the end, there was nothing she could do but to inflict despair on anyone involved with her. That’s why this is despair…the fact that I finally understand that.”

I finally understood as well.

The thumping in my chest, I just now remembered.

The moment I gave up on everything, I remembered my feelings towards Matsuda-kun.

This must be because of the Scenario Junko Enoshima set up.

In order for despair, she had me finally remember it.

“That’s why I’ve decided…to end things once and for all.”

Matsuda-kun finally stopped in front of my eyes.

The distance between us was to the point where our feet almost touched, and while I felt the continuous heartbeat in my chest, I felt dizzy with blood rushing to my head as I looked at him.

Then, as if about to embrace me, he took those hands and squeezed them around my neck.

I was done for.

There must have been no other way. After all, Junko Enoshima was an important existence for him. Seeing how no one loved Matsuda-kun more than I did, I understood that.

But, to the very end,

I wanted to die in the world of Matsuda-kun and I.

That was the hope that embraced me to the very end.

“Is this also for the sake of…Junko Enoshima…?”

With that faint hope in my chest, I timidly asked that question.

“…No, this is for my sake.”

His calm response surprised even me.

I’ve already accepted this.

I’ve already completely accepted Ryouko Otonashi’s end.

“You don’t need to remember anything anymore…”

I could feel his warm breath on my cheeks as he spoke those gentle words.

“…This is, the end of everything.”

“Yeah, I know. After all, this has nothing to do with me, right…”

He then calmly began to put force into his hands.

But it I wasn’t in pain.

In fact, the warmth coming from the palms of his hands felt comfortable, I was most likely smiling.

Thump. Thump. Thump. Thump.

Thump. Thump. Thump. Thump.

My raging heartbeat. My entire body heating up. Intense ringing in my ears.

I guess I was at least a bit scared, but Matsuda-kun’s face in front of me seemed to become gentle, as he released his extreme stress.

Ah, It really is Matsuda-kun.

As I burned that face into my memory, I slowly closed my eyes.

I’ll be done at this rate.

Everything will be over.

It'll finally—

not be over.

"Upupupup

crumbled apart, and I faded away.

Everything crumbled away, and went back to normal.

My world ended, and her world was created.

That would be my, Ryouko Otonashi's, final moment.

Then, everything finally returned back to normal.

The strength within those hands gradually began to weaken as energy left the entire body.

Then Matsuda finally relinquished his grip on that girl.

clang

A sound rang out from the ground. It was a knife tainted by blood. It was a knife engraved with Hope's Peak Academy's emblem. Blood could be seen dripping down around it, and soon it developed into a sizeable pool of red.

Putting my hand towards my stomach, I could feel a warm sensation.

Matsuda then returned his eyes to that girl.

"…Listen, you bitch."

He spoke while suffering.

"B-Before I die, you should know that…what I told you was a lie. That wasn't any kind of treatment. I've been…preventing, you, from, remembering, anything, at all…"

I already know that

I then heard that voice.

The mouth of that girl who responded began to swerve.

It must have been a smile.

Smiling from the taste of the knife that pierced Matsuda-kun's flesh.

And that's when Matsuda confirmed it.

The fact that the person known as Ryouko Otonashi, no longer exists.

"Um, by the way…"

Mukuro Ikusaba's murmuring voice could be heard.

"I was only supposed to appear in Junko-chan's likeness in front of the real one, but I accidentally got caught by Madarai at one point…but I really didn't caught by anyone else…"

"O-Obviously…"

Matsuda coughed up blood along with his resentful voice."

"A-Anybody who knew would easily be able to tell…even if you are sisters, you two are still different people…besides, the Enoshima who appeared before me…is definitely the real one."

Hearing the words "different people", Ikusaba, as if annoyed, turned her eyes away from him and instead placed them only on that girl and spoke.

"That's why…for this case, besides me being disguised as Junko-chan, the real Junko-chan conducted her own secret plans as well…it's just that, she herself did not even realize that…meaning, Junko-chan was deceived by herself."

"I-In the end…everything went just as planned…from the very beginning straight to the end…"

Matsuda spoke to that girl as well. While speaking, his consciousness was beginning to fade away, and just standing appeared to be a

struggle. But even so, his frail gaze continued to focus on that girl.

“B-But there’s one thing I don’t understand…why you planned such a troublesome turn of events. Why you went so far to have me take away your memory…in order to escape investigation from the school…it doesn’t sound pleasant at all…but even so, you were able to push through all of it. T-Then why…”

Failing to keep his ground, he finally sat down. But Matsuda continued his interrogation, resolute on obtaining his answer.

“W-Was it to…p-pull me, who was always thinking of you, into despair?”

That girl then began to finally move.

She gently caressed his face with her hand in an almost lovingly way, and sat down next to him, paying no matter to the blood spread around the area.

She then drew Matsuda’s face, whose eyes were beginning to drift away, towards her own, and whispered.

I’ll tell you.

That whisper was filled with a gentle feeling love, but it soon radically changed.

“Are you fucking kidding me? Don’t get so ahead of yourself! There’s no way in hell I’d go through this pain in the ass mess just to bring you into despair! What the hell are you thinking!?”

As soon as those words finished, that girl immediately thrusted her hand away from Matsuda’s face.

Doing so, Matsuda collapsed onto the pool of blood he created.

“Y-You don’t give a damn…is what you’re saying, huh…”

Matsuda muttered those words as he laid on his back gazing towards the ceiling.

Staring at that face from straight above was that girl. Their faces were close enough for the tips of their noses to easily touch. But even so, his gaze didn’t exactly match up with hers, as it began to absent-mindedly falter.

“I guess…I don’t have anything to with this…t-that really was the case after all…”

Because of the overflowing blood, I felt an unnatural warmth developing in the back of my throat. But, that soon faded away.

“H-How long have you felt that way…has it been since…we were children?”

“Upupupupu.”

That girl’s face then warped into a cruel smile.

“What if I told you…that the reason your mom got that way was because of me? What kind of face would you show me?”

“…Wha-?”

Pain as if a sharp needle passed through his heart was displayed.

“You’re, you’re not serious…are you?”

As he spoke with that shivering voice, bits of blood splattered onto that girl’s face from his mouth. It stood out more than even her cruel, inhumane smile.

“A-answer me…”

While Matsuda grew more and more grave, Enoshima on the other hand seemed to fall into ecstasy. Without giving any response, that girl just continued to watch as she cupped her chin in her hands.

Matsuda’s soul was falling into the depths of despair.

His own meaning of life was thoroughly and decisively violated, and was then rejected.

He had completely given in to despair.

“P-Please…respond…”

His clinging words barely formed into words at all.

“C’mon…what’s your answer…Junko Enoshima…”

That was the end.

Without ever hearing his answer, Yasuke Matsuda died.

Completely submerged in despair, he died.

Once she confirmed everything had ended, Junko Enoshima slowly got up.

But, she ceased her actions and decided to look down for a while longer.

She stared at the Yasuke Matsuda who had experienced his last breath not too long ago.

“There’s no way this would have nothing to do with me…”

There was a hint of sadness laid somewhere in that murmuring voice.

“After all…you were the most important person to me of all…”

Those were her true feelings.

Yasuke Matsuda was an especially important existence for Junko Enoshima. Ever since they were children, he always stood up for her, always continued to unconditionally love her, and above all, just being by his side made her heart feel warm.

But, she killed off that existence with her own hands. She stepped on it, forced it past the gates of despair, and brutally murdered it.

“This…this is…”

But, that’s what Enoshima had desired.

She loved him so much, that irreplaceable existence, more important than anyone else, almost obsessed with him to the point of insanity, always wanting to be within his embrace, even living in a world with only him would be fine. And by losing that incredible existence, just how much despair would I fall in?

She nurtured her love for Matsuda all this time just to get a taste of that feeling. Seeing her loved one be smothered by despair during his last moments, she pretty much lived to experience that spectacle.

Finally getting to taste that despair,

“…INCREDIBLE!!”

It was more than anything she could have hoped for.

“Too depressing! Too good! My chest is gonna tear open! This is true

self-loathing! I want to die! This is! This is the despair that comes from losing a loved one!”

While Enoshima’s being was assaulted by that despair, she kicked Yasuke Matsuda’s corpse with all her strength.

“Amazing, amazing! Amazingamazingamazingamazingamazing!”

While absorbed in screaming, she kicked the corpse of the one she so dearly longed for with no mercy whatsoever.

Flowing out of her eyes were a continuous stream of tears.

While those tears of delight, lament, and confusion overwhelmingly flowed, kicked her beloved’s corpse until it was a lump of meat barely holding any resemblance to its original form.

“Upu…upupupu…upupupu. Upupupu. Upupupu. Upupupu. Upupupu. Upupupu. Upupupu. Upupupu. Upupupu. Upupupu. Upupupu. Upupupu. Upupupu. Upupupu. Upupupu. Upupupu. Upupupu. Upupupu.”

When Kyouko Kirigiri opened her eyes, she found herself at the infirmary.

The scene outside the window portrayed nightfall. It seemed that at some point the day had reached evening.

As Kyouko slowly rose out of her bed,

“Look’s like you’re awake.”

A man’s voice could be coming from the window. It belonged to Hope’s Peak Academy’s Principal, Jin Kirigiri.

“You were completely knocked out. Has work finally caught up to you?”

“How…long have I been asleep?”

“You wouldn’t stay put so I had the school physician give you some medicine. It should still be in effect so things may still be a bit hazy. You should probably just relax for now…”

Her consciousness and sensations were certainly still a bit dim. Following orders from him was frustrating but, there isn’t much one can do against the effects of medicine. With no other choice, Kyouko laid back down on the bed.

And then she remembered.

She remembered the moment when Mukuro Ikusaba came to assist her.

Being cornered by the Madarai brothers, she appeared at just the right time and saved her.

But, why did she save her? Sure, there were classmates but, there were hardly any occasions of social interaction between them.

Putting that outside however, there was a more pressing issue at hand.

The girl that was with her when attacked by the Madarai brothers, Junko Enoshima, what happened to her?

She tackled that question in her mind in a very Kirigiri-like manner.

Then,

"…It appears that she was rescued by Ikusaba-kun as well. I'll save you the trouble of overthinking things…she's being temporarily hospitalized at one of the medical facilities in the teaching staff faculty building. Although the silver lining is well…how would I say this…due to the shock from that incident, it seems that she's recovered her memory."

"Memory…?"

"She'll soon return to her regular school schedule. But, it seems that she doesn't remember anything from when she lost her memory. Because that, there have been numerous confusing issues going on… and everyone has been taking care of her."

"I see…"

A classmate returning to class should have been a joyous occasion, but something didn't feel right.

Like something was being overdone.

"Also…there's something important I have to discuss with you."

His following words then completely brushed off Kyouko's doubt.

"…I'll be closing the investigation request on Izuru Kamukura."

"Eh…?"

Kyouko immediately rose up from the sudden report.

"…Why all of a sudden?"

Her question was one of urgency.

"Sorry but, I can't really talk about that."

"W-What are you-"

"Ok fine, I wasn't satisfied with the contents of your work…how does that work for you?"

Recognizing his lack of acknowledgement, Kyouko scrunched her eyebrows in inquisitiveness.

"…Then, what happened to Kamukura?"

“Speaking of which, just today the new Committee Board members got inaugurated to replace the old ones.”

“Don’t avoid the subject.”

“Due to the members changing, decisions involving confidential information have increased. No matter what you have to say, I don’t really have much freedom to be carelessly discussing our secrets.”

That statement was a clear refusal. Hearing those words, all Kyouko could do was respond with a murmur of resentment.

“Why are you telling me this now…”

“Alright, in return, how about I reveal to you this confidential information we’ve been talking about? That is, if your pride as a detective would allow it.”

His words were almost like a challenge. He was being like that for quite a while. The words “You were just being used this whole time.” were likely. That kind of thought process was simple, but there was a feeling that the reason behind it couldn’t be so simple. But, what caused that feeling?

Was it the intuition of a detective?

Or was it because he was her father.

She immediately shaked her head.

Shaking off that last train of thought, she roughly responded.

“…I understand. I don’t mind giving up on the request. However, there is one thing I would like to know.”

Kirigiri was watching from outside the mirror in silence.

“…What happened to Yasuke Matsuda? And the Madarai brothers?”

A moment of silence passed, and Kirigiri let out a hefty sigh. He then turned his eyes and began walking towards the door of the infirmary. Kyouko followed his movements carefully with her eyes. He then stopped in front of the door, and without turning his back he spoke.

“Expulsion…that’s how it seems they were dealt with…”

His words felt heavy, and a hint of anger could be heard among them

as well.

“Not only that, it was the new Committee Board members’ intention as well. To strictly conceal the incident under the darkness. Those involved, Matsuda-kun and Madarai-kun were expelled, and soon others will follow as well.”

“…You aren’t going to stop them?”

“All I did was recieve the report. They’re not even in the school building anymore. Even you probably would have difficulty in tracking them down.”

Letting out another huge sigh, Kirigiri began to grind his teeth.

“Although, it sure was a convenient development…convenient to the point where one would think someone was manipulating the events from the shadows…”

But, he quickly turned his head, as if he regretted what he just said.

“…Even without any formal request, I’ll still be looking into it.”

Aimed towards the back of Kirigiri, were words full of determination.

Hearing those words, he responded without turning back.

“Detectives can’t do anything until an incident ends…they’re useless until all the victims show up…that’s a trait that exists within even the most expert detectives. But I think you’re different. I feel qualities coming from you that exceed ones of a detective. Those are words coming from witnessing your various talents up to this point. I think I’ll be keeping them in mind.”

“…What are you trying to say?”

Kyouko let out a stiff voice.

“There’s no need for apprehending…”

Kirigiri then looked past his shoulder, towards Kyouko who was tight-lipped with anger, and an expression close to tears.

“One last thing. You’re free to investigate on your own, however, if you happen to endanger yourself or attempt to bypass the school rules…I won’t plan to show any mercy. Prepare yourself. If you can’t keep that in mind, you’ll be leaving this school.”

Without waiting for any response from Kyouko, Kirigiri left the infirmary.

When entering the hallway, he let out yet another huge sigh.

Even though he was trying to keep her away from the incident for her own good, it still pained him. But she wasn't the type to just happily listen to orders. There wasn't anything to be done about that.

The situation was already out of Kirigiri's hands.

Just like the ex-Committee Board members who disappeared, the new ones would eventually become figures of valuable position in their various fields.

Soon after their inauguration, the termination of the Kamukura Project was announced.

It was their way of saying that the existence known as "Super High School Level Hope" never existed. It wasn't a very surprising turnabout. Kirigiri became the core, and the symbol of hope that Hope's Peak Academy raised and nurtured all these years, was abandoned unceremoniously.

Following these actions, the new Committee Board members' decisions and plans were quick and prompt. Through various methods, they were able to construct concealment for the incident. It appeared they were instructed by some other party.

All of a sudden, Kirigiri began to pick up pace as he continued down the hallway.

While walking at a brisk pace, he inadvertently glanced towards the window.

The idea that everything had ended was not present.

Rather, it felt like it was the start of a new turn of events.

Most likely, not a good turn of events.

A horrible incident was going to occur from this school, and then consume the world.

No one would be able to stop that.

From that prediction, Kirigiri felt an uncharacteristic chill creep on.

But, Kirigiri's decision was already set in place.

For the sake of the students, it might be time to speed up that plan. An area where even the new Committee Board members would not catch wind of, there was no other choice than the Ex-School Building.

With that thought in mind, Kirigiri began to fall into a dash. But he didn't realize it. He didn't realize what was happening to himself.

His mouth was began to faintly bend.

He must have been able to sense it. The talent holding the ability to throw the world into chaos was lurking somewhere in Hope's Peak Academy.

That was possibly why he was trembling from being enveloped by interest in this existence.

But, even so,

He had no way of knowing what laid ahead.

Eventually, that talent will inflict despair across the world, and that very despair will trample across even himself.

But Jin Kirigiri was still completely unaware.

Back from her long period of absence, the first thing taken care of when returning to her dorm room was applying the makeup.

Looking at her reflection in the mirror, Junko Enoshima saw despair.

Geez, Matsuda-kun sure had horrible taste.

Reflecting in the mirror was a simply plain, normal, and uninteresting female high school student.

"…To think something like this was of value for despair."

I don't know if he picked something up from his mother or something-
Going over the sense of a loved one in despair while applying makeup, she next began to tidy up the room, beginning with picking off the numerous post-it notes saying "This is my room".

And then the Ryouko Otonashi Notebook…

Looking at this notebook brought back memories of Yasuke Matsuda. Remembering him, she could feel her chest tightening. Consumed by disgust at what she did to him, she was compelled to cry and scream out.

I want to forget this already! I want to just get rid of this notebook!

"Aha! All the more reason to keep this on hand!"

With an indescribable expression somewhere between woe and excitement, she flipped through the pages.

Suddenly, her hand stopped.

On that page laid a ridiculous amount of likeness portraits of Yasuke Matsuda.

"These horrible drawings are surprisingly heartrending…how exciting."

As expected, it seemed that her heart's wound wouldn't heal any time soon. But that's how it should be. After all, she went so out of her way and lost her memory to taste this despair.

Speaking of which, that wasn't the only reason she had her memory lost.

There was another goal in mind as well.

That reason was within the notebook within Enoshima's hands. Reports on Matsuda's methods in manipulating her memory were recorded in that very notebook.

That was her other reason.

Memory manipulation was required for the final stage of her plan to inflict further despair. That's why she wanted to test it. That's why wanted to test it on herself. She arranged for Matsuda to take away her memory, resulting in becoming a subject to that memory manipulation.

"I guess this is all one can expect from just an experiment…just becoming forgetful is only half-way progress, I guess Matsuda-kun just didn't try hard enough. Well, once I take care of it, I'm sure it'll turn out perfectly. Taking over a loved one's lovely research…I'll be sure to make use of it in the most despair-inducing way possible."

Her other reason for using Matsuda was for this experiment.

For that experiment, she anticipated Matsuda's actions and then proceeded to move freely within her own convenience.

That goes for others as well. She anticipated the results of everything, and manipulated those events at will.

By doing this, she finished her perfect development.

It was the same for even Enoshima herself.

She was able to control even her own actions, and experienced the greatest taste of despair.

"Yoo Hoo! I'm baaaaaack!"

Suddenly a strange voice rang out as the door to the room flew open.

Standing at the door was a blonde haired girl.

The one who disguised as Junko Enoshima, Mukuro Ikusaba.

With expression displayed on her face, her cheeks rose and formed a huge smile.

"Ahaha, were you surprised? I was hoping to surprise you a bit in

commemoration for your return-”

“Do you think I’m retarded?”

But, Enoshima freezingly shot back.

“Are you trying to raise the tension or something? What are you going to do if someone sees you dressed like that? Are you going to take responsibility for that? Heck, are you even capable of doing that?”

“I-I’m…sorry…”

As if completely withered, her shoulders crumpled.

“Also, you barely even look like me! Are you even trying? In fact, do I even look that retarded? Do I?”

“Um, but I followed Junko-chan’s written instructions completely…”

“I see, you can’t do anything unless told, you really are retarded.”

“I-I’m…really sorry!”

As she hurried to get changed, her eyes were completely blurred with tears.

“Man, and you still have that ridiculously skinny body! If you have time to perform in the military, you should try getting a body that men would actually like!”

“I-I’m sorry…please don’t be mad anymore…”

While watching her sister’s shoulders shake like a puppy being scolded, Enoshima once again stuck out her tongue(?).

Geez, I really got to rethink how I’m going to use this one.

Besides Enoshima having her sister disguise herself as Enoshima to fool her amnesiac self, there was of course one other goal.

It was another experiment. Mukuro Ikusaba’s disguise was a key component in her future plan to inflict further despair.

Memory manipulation was also an experiment.

Mukuro Ikusaba’s disguise was also an experiment.

No, there was more.

Forcing high school students into mutual killing and showing that visual to others to spread despair. That was, once again, also an experiment.

Everything was an experiment put into practice, killing two birds with one stone.

That's what Hope's Peak Academy's Worst Incident meant to Junko Enoshima.

Furthermore, the murder of the Committee Board members were part of that as well.

Besides forcing the location of Kamukura out of them, Enoshima wanted them to be replaced.

"Hmm, although the experiment this time around overall felt like it was missing some excitement…was it too psychotic? I wonder if I can make it even more excitingly psychotic…I guess forcing mutual killing right away is too stiff, maybe I should make it a game of some sort… yeah! That way, the murders might get a lot more dramatic!"

Of course, a mascot is necessary as well.

For this experiment, those brainwashed were dressed in sort of a cartoon character outfit but, that was no good.

That was just tasteless. There's room for tons of improvement.

"Um, well…so…"

Abruptly, Ikusaba's voice spoke out.

"Huh? What do you want?"

Enoshima clicked her tongue as she listened to what she had to say.

"Um…why didn't you hand over Izuru Kamukura over to the Preparatory Department?"

Hearing that, Enoshima clicked her tongue even louder.

"Man, you really are retarded…if they got to kill Kamukura, then they'd be satisfied just like that. That's no good. I want their uneasiness, complaints, and dissatisfaction to build up, and them

explode all at once. Then they'd show their worth by becoming a mob, right? That's what they're there for."

"Oh, I see…"

A bitter smile revealed itself on Ikusaba's face as she nodded in understanding.

"Then, does that mean Kamukura is no longer needed…?"

"I don't really have anything in mind right now but…well, nothings going to happen if we just leave him be anyway. Besides, he's not anything like Super High School Level Hope anymore, he's someone who has fallen into the depths of despair!"

That was again, another result that followed her prediction.

In the end, everything moved along with Enoshima's will.

Everything fell perfectly in line with what Enoshima's ambition was.

Well, this experiment allowed me to taste despair, so I could say it was a success.

But, a little part in her still had hoped for something else.

She had hoped that the plan she worked so hard to concoct would fall into pieces despairingly.

This time it wasn't like that, but maybe someday I'll be able to taste that flavor of despair. She even sowed some seeds for the purpose of that possibly occurring.

"Ahahaha! I really am amazing, aren't I!"

Without thinking she erupted into laughter.

"I even prepared a flag for when I myself would lose…I'm the very definition of a mastermind! Don't you think so, sister?"

"Yes..but your way of talking…"

"I got tired of this personality! How many fucking years have you been my sister?"

Shifting to a violent personality and shouting at her sister Ikusaba, she soon gave up on that as well and then began staring towards the

window.

“…What’s wrong?”

Despite Ikusaba’s worried voice, she continued to stared at the window.

Out there was a parade.

Like a surging tidal wave, the parade was flowing through the school dorms.

I wonder what those in class are thinking looking at this right now.

I wonder if they’re experiencing the death of their hope?

Enoshima quickly stood up and spoke with an energized voice.

“Alright, now that the tension is off the charts, let’s go head to class! Our beloved classmates are waiting for us!”

“O-Ok…”

Just like that, Enoshima momentarily returned to her school life.

It was annoying getting friendly with others, but soon the spice of unbelievable despair will scatter about. Actually, I’m getting pretty excited.

“Alright! Let’s enjoy the rest of our school life to its fullest!”

After all, that was her true motive.

Thus, the keywords were set.

The flag was raised.

Mutual Killing, Ex-School Building, Brainwashed Preparatory Department, Super High School Level Hope, Class 78, Hope’s Peak Academy’s Committee Board, Principle, Memory Manipulation, Mukuro Ikusaba’s disguise, Monokuma.

It all begins from here.

The plan to create the strongest despair all starts from here.

The, World’s, Most, Despair, Inducing, Incident, starts, from, here.

Predicting what will occur is simple. But not doing so would be more interesting. A stronger taste of despair will come on that way. But can I hold on for that long? Aah, what should I do?!

Just picturing that despair caused Enoshima's heart to jump.

Because Super High School Level Junko Enoshima,

Wishes for despair above anything else.

Finds hope within despair more than anyone else.

Finds hope?

"…What the hell? Me finding hope?"

Realizing that she had been embracing hope,

She fell into despair.